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**Palestinian resistance poetry and the historical struggle for
liberation**

Hutchison, Peggy J., M.A.

The University of Arizona, 1991

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**PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE POETRY
AND THE HISTORICAL STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION**

by

Peggy Hutchison

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL STUDIES
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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PREFACE

Following the June War of 1967, Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya, Fath, explained the Palestinian struggle with these words: "the revolution has a Palestinian face and an Arab heart."

For most people living in the West, especially the United States, the Palestinian face and Arab heart do not exist. Too many people identify Palestinians with "terrorists" or "displaced persons" who should be satisfied living in designated Arab lands. As Professor Edward Said writes in his book Orientalism: "The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny."

This paper is the product of years of study (Arabic, Arabic literature, Middle East history). Whenever friends and acquaintances learned of my interest in this field, too often they were unable to understand. It was totally foreign to them and the issues too complex. Their response was to change the subject.

Nevertheless, I wanted to portray the Palestinian face and Arab heart in an academic study. I embarked upon this project for these reasons: my love of poetry and my

passion for the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and a homeland free from occupation. This is, therefore, not an objective paper. However, my ten years of undergraduate and graduate studies as well as life experiences have taught me that there is no such thing as academic objectivity, at least in the social sciences. I believe that it is impossible to be objective about anything personal in this world for the personal is political. Even the position of neutrality is a form of taking sides. (Many scholars have debated this point. See for example: Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry, and Prose, edited by Cheryl Brown and Karen Olson; and Resistance Literature, by Barbara Harlow.)

There are limitations to this paper. First, this is not an anthology of all the Palestinian resistance poetry written by Fadwā Ṭūqān, Maḥmūd Darwish, and Samīḥ al-Qāsim during the years 1967-1977. There are many poems I did not include. I did, however, try to choose a representative sample of the poetry written by these three authors during that ten year period. Second, any language is an inadequate language for translating poetry. A poem translated loses something. While translating the poems of Fadwā Ṭūqān, written in Arabic, I often found one word in Arabic which conveyed a historic tradition or way of living

or feelings that I was unable to translate into one word in English and still capture the meaning in Arabic.

I would like to acknowledge the following people who were extremely helpful to me as I worked on this project: Mohyeddin Abdulaziz and Thabet Khalidi for sharing their collections of Palestinian poetry with me. Dr. Adel S. Gamal for his patient, knowledgeable translation assistance and without whose help the Palestinian poetry of Fadwa Tuqan could not have been included. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Adel S. Gamal and Dr. Leslie A. Fleming for their careful and thoughtful critiques of my first draft and the helpful suggestions they gave me. I would further like to thank both of them and Dr. William Wilson for their willingness to serve on my thesis committee and offer their assistance and expertise in the midst of very busy schedules. And lastly, I want to thank Michael Elsner for his critical mind, sense of humor and loving support throughout this project.

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ABSTRACT

Since the late nineteenth century, modern Palestinian resistance poetry has been an expression of the Palestinian peoples' national culture and their historical struggle for self-determination and a homeland.

This study examines Palestinian resistance poetry written during the ten year period following the June War of 1967, which tripled the land area of the state of Israel. English translations of three prominent Palestinian poets: Fadwā Ṭūqān, Maḥmūd Darwīsh, and Samīh al-Qāsim, are preceded by commentaries on the history of Palestinian poetry prior to 1967, and on the post-1967 occupation of Palestine. The poetry is analyzed according to four themes: the identity theme, the wound theme, the freedom fighters, and woman's place.

Through this study of Palestinian resistance poetry in its historical context, the reader may develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between Palestinian national culture and the struggle for a homeland.

CHAPTER I: RESISTANCE LITERATURE IN THE THIRD WORLD

Introduction

Prior to World War II the regions of Africa, Asia, much of the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean islands were colonies and neo-colonies controlled by Europe and the United States. Following the war, however, the world began to change in dramatic ways.

Colonial empires collapsed during the next thirty years as countries began to reject Western control and domination and the imposition of white people's culture. This rise of nationalism, not an abstract, static event, was a dynamic, evolutionary process of national-democratic revolution.¹ Even today it is a process that many third world countries are undertaking.

For the people of the third world, the national-democratic revolution is a struggle against the life of occupation and exploitation in search of total liberation. Consequently, it involves armed struggle. However, it is also "a struggle over the historical and cultural record."² The revolution calls upon the colonized people to demystify their history as taught/imposed by the colonial power. It calls upon them to redefine their true culture. In 1942, in his "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art", Mao Zedong expressed the relationship between armed struggle, history, and culture this way:

There are a number of different fronts in our struggle for the national liberation of China, civil and military, or, we might say, there is a cultural as well as an armed front. Victory over the enemy depends primarily on armies with guns in their hands, but this kind of army alone is not enough. We still need a cultural army, since this kind of army is indispensable in achieving unity among ourselves and winning victory over the enemy.³

For resistance movements across the globe, such as: the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Mau Mau in Kenya, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the efforts of which resulted in the liberation of Guinea-Bissau, the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the "struggle over the historical and cultural record" has been as vitally important as the armed struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

It is not surprising then that participants in these movements have produced a wide variety of literary writings, including novels, short stories, drama, poetry, prison journals, and essays that speak to the social, political, economic, personal and collective nature of their struggle.

Native writers, however, have not always felt called to participate in the resistance movement engaged in a fight against colonialism. Just as the rise of a national-democratic revolution is not a single, fixed, static event, the transformation of native writers from colonial-inspired scribes into revolutionary fighters whose ammunition springs from the "barrel of a pen"⁴ is also an evolutionary process.

Frantz Fanon, a Martinique-born psychiatrist who became a leading spokesperson for the Algerian revolution, explained this evolution of the native writer by identifying three phases the native writer passes through. The first he calls the assimilation phase. Here the writer has assimilated, as much as s/he is allowed, into the colonial culture. The writer receives inspiration from the European or North American occupying power. Fanon points out that in this phase, the works of the writer can be easily connected to "definite trends in the literature of the mother country."⁵ Therefore the native writer can prove that s/he has successfully become assimilated into the culture of the occupying power. Kenyan novelist and playwright Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, influenced by the Mau Mau movement in Kenya and who now lives in exile in England, describes this as the "aesthetic of oppression and exploitation and of acquiescence with imperialism."⁶

The second phase identified by Fanon is the disturbed phase. At this point the writer is not happy with being a colonial clone. S/he begins to remember her/his roots and to pull out past events from memory. Since the writer has only what Fanon describes as exterior relations with her/his people, the writer can only pull from the past instead of writing about the present. Fanon writes that: "Sometimes this literature of just-before-the battle is dominated by humor and by allegory; but often too it is symptomatic of a period of distress and difficulty, where death is experienced, and disgust too."⁷

The third phase is described by Fanon as the fighting phase. The native writer is transformed from "having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people" to now becoming an "awakener of the people." No longer will the native writer describe the people and events shaping their life as an outsider because s/he has become involved in the liberation movement her/himself. This is what Mao Zedong spoke of when he said that workers in literature and art must serve the masses. In order to awaken and arouse the masses of people, the writer must be living and fighting with the people. It is a mutual process for student and teacher. On the one hand the writer is to "go to the sole, the broadest, and the richest source, to observe, experience, study, and analyze all the different kinds of

people, all the classes and all the masses, all the vivid patterns of life and struggle..."⁸, thus becoming a student. On the other hand the writer is also the teacher by "creating a work of literature and art which can awaken and arouse the popular masses, urging them on to unity and to struggle and to take part in transforming their own environment."⁹ The fighting literature, as Fanon explains, has become a "revolutionary literature and a national literature."

In direct contradiction to what the colonized people learned from the occupying power, which taught them that they have no history and no culture of their own, the native writer learns through this process that people can become active participants in shaping their own destiny. Thus the resistance movements throughout the third world see the role of culture, as an element of resistance to foreign domination, as vital.

The relationship between national culture and the historical struggle for liberation has been explained by Amilcar Cabral, a leading African revolutionary figure born in the Portuguese colony of Guinea, who helped form the PAIGC. Cabral believed that history and culture were interdependent. "Culture is", he wrote, "simultaneously the fruit of a people's history just as a flower is the product of a plant."¹⁰ Culture, he believed, was

responsible for the continuity of a people's history. Since colonial powers work to deny indigenous culture, then national liberation is viewed as an extension of culture. "Armed liberation struggle is an act of making history bear fruit," he wrote, "the highest expression of our culture and of our African-ness."¹¹

In 1966, the well-known Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani authored a study entitled: Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966. In this study, Kanafani was the first Palestinian to use the term "resistance" (muqāwamah) in relation to Palestinian literature. Since Kanafani's study was written prior to the June War of 1967, the literature he documented and studied is the literature produced by Palestinians living under the occupation of pre-1967 Israel. It is literature of occupation as opposed to that of "exile" (manfa). As Barbara Harlow points out in her book Resistance Literature, "In 1966 when Kanafani wrote his study, the literature of occupied Palestine (Israel) was, because of official repression and censorship inside Israel and studied neglect within the Arab world, largely unknown outside the borders of the then 18-year-old state of Israel."¹² Because the Palestinians have been denied their nation, culture, and history by their Israeli occupiers, what Kanafani described as a "cultural siege (hisar

thaqafi),"¹³ the very act of generating their own literature within this historical context, is an act of resistance.

Palestinian resistance literature, then, fits well into the category of resistance literature. Since the Palestinian people continue to be an occupied people, it takes on added relevance today.

Purpose of This Study

In this study I intend to examine the relationship between national culture and the historical struggle for liberation through the study of Palestinian resistance literature. The historical context begins immediately following the June War of 1967, in which the Israeli Government tripled the land area under its occupation, and ends ten years later in 1977. Since poetry, above all other forms of literature, has played such an important role in the lives of the Arab people, (from the early pre-Islamic years up through today,) I have chosen to examine Palestinian resistance poetry. In order to narrow and simplify the subject matter, I have chosen three Palestinian poets of resistance, shu'arā al-muqāwamah: Fadwā Ṭūqān, Maḥmūd Darwīsh, and Samīḥ al-Qāsim. I have chosen these three because they are among the most well-known of the Palestinian poets of resistance covering two

different generations. I have also chosen them because of the historical context in which they have lived and produced their work.

Fadwā Ṭūqān was born and reared in Nablus on the West Bank. Born in 1917, she has experienced occupation under both Jordan and Israel. Although she was 50 years old when Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, her poetry took a dramatic change in theme and tone. Whereas her early work had a romantic theme and tone, similar to many young women poets in the Middle East, Ṭūqān's writings following the June War centered upon the occupation. Her poetry is also important to examine because her depiction of "woman's place" within the Palestinian liberation movement is less idealized and more multi-faceted than her male counterparts.

Maḥmūd Darwīsh is the most well-known among Palestinian poets. He was born in 1942 in al-Barweh, a village east of Acre in Palestine. At the age of six years, Darwīsh and his family had to flee their native village on foot when the Zionists invaded and completely destroyed it along with several other villages. The family fled to Lebanon where they lived for one year, surviving on United Nations handouts. Since there was no al-Barweh to return to, the Darwīsh family returned to Deir al-Asad, a village in Galilee. Darwīsh's poetry is important because

it is representative of the native writer who has entered Fanon's fighting phase presented above.

Although Samīh al-Qāsim was born in Zarqa, Jordan (in 1939) his family was originally from Ramah, a village in Galilee. Soon after his birth, his family returned to their native village of Ramah. While al-Qāsim was still in primary school, the 1947-49 War began. On November 5, 1948, he and his family had to flee their village. It is this historical event of foreign occupation which defines the poet's reality. He writes: "While I was still in primary school, the 1948 Palestinian tragedy occurred. I regard that date as the date of my birth, because the first images I can remember are of the 1948 events. My thoughts and images spring from the number 48."¹⁴ It is from these thoughts, images, and experiences that Samīh al-Qāsim shapes his poetry, and why, in turn, his poetry is so important to the Palestinian liberation movement.

Chapter II, presents a brief history of Palestinian poetry prior to 1967. Chapter III examines the historical context of Palestinian occupation following the June 1967 War. The next four Chapters, IV-VII, analyze the poetry of Ṭūqān, Darwīsh, and al-Qāsim by the following four themes: the identity theme, the wound theme, the freedom fighters, and woman's place. The conclusion of this study, (Chapter VIII,) builds upon an understanding of Palestinian history

and of Palestinian resistance poetry and its underlying themes. In recognizing the struggle for a Palestinian homeland free from foreign domination, the words of Amilcar Cabral, that "national liberation is a cultural act", are affirmed.

Notes for Chapter I:

- 1.E. San Juan, Jr., "Literature and Revolution in the Third World," Social Praxis,6-1/2 (1979),p.22.
- 2.Barbara Harlow, Resistance Literature, (New York: Methuen,1987),p.7.
- 3.Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art," Michigan Papers in Chinese Series, No.39 (1980), p.57.
- 4.This is the title of a book of essays by the Kenyan novelist and playwright Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. In Barrel of a Pen Ngũgĩ "argues that the defense of national culture and national identity is central in the overall struggle against regimes of repression and imperialist domination."
- 5.Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, (New York:Grove Press,Inc.,1963),p.222.
- 6.Harlow, Resistance Literature, p.8.
- 7.Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, p.222.
- 8.Mao Zedong, "Talks on Literature and Art," p.70.
- 9.Ibid., p.70.
- 10.Patrick Chabal, Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War, (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1983), p.183.
- 11.Amilcar Cabral, Unity and Struggle, (London:Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.,1980), p.153.
- 12.Harlow, Resistance Literature, p.2.
- 13.Ibid., p.3.
- 14.Abdullah al-Udhari, trans., Victims of a Map: A Bilingual Anthology of Arabic Poetry, (London:Zed Press,1984), p.50.

CHAPTER II: PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE POETRY PRIOR TO 1967

In the tradition of the Arab people, the presence of poetry goes back to the early pre-Islamic years. In pre-Islamic Arabia the poet played a vital role within the family and community:

When there appeared a poet in a family of the Arabs, the other tribes round about would gather together to that family and wish them joy of their good luck. Feasts would be got ready, the women of the tribe would join together in bands, playing upon lutes, as they were wont to do at bridals, and the men and boys would congratulate one another; for a poet was a defence to the honor of them all, a weapon to ward off insult from their good name, and a means of perpetuating their glorious deeds and of establishing their fame for ever. And they used not to wish one another joy but for three things---the birth of a boy, the coming to light of a poet, and the foaling of a noble mare.¹

The poet, then, served as spokesperson for the tribe who defended its honor and virtue. The poet told of the day to day life experiences and the political consciousness of the tribe. The poet's work was meant for all to enjoy and share with others. It was not an art form meant for an elite few, but a form of expression of defeats and victories, of pain and hope, that has accompanied the Arab people throughout their history. As Mounah Khouri and Hamid Algar point out in their Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry: "...if we review the classical poetic tradition, we realize that it has rarely relinquished its vital role as a vehicle for the portrayal and articulation of the social and intellectual trends of the time."²

Arabic poetry as both an art form and symbol of Arab identity, "the embodiment of ancient tradition passed on to future generations,"³ has always been written in Classical Arabic. Classical Arabic is the language able to express the "common historical experience and the hoped-for-unity"⁴ of the Arab people.

Palestinian resistance poetry, then, can neither be divorced from its pre-Islamic Arab literary history nor separated from modern Arabic poetry. Since most Palestinian resistance poetry is written in Classical Arabic instead of local Palestinian dialects, the reader is constantly reminded of this pan-Arab context in which it is written. As poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh has said of contemporary Palestinian poetry: "Our poetry is not a substitute for nor a rival to modern Arabic poetry; it is an indivisible part of it, one of the tributaries of the mainstream."⁵

A.M. Elmessiri, in his book The Palestinian Wedding, explains that when Palestine and Palestinian poetry are seen in a broad pan-Arab context, the viewer is freed from seeing them in the "narrow and constricted perspective of Zionist settler-colonialism." In his introduction, Elmessiri presents five historical periods of modern Palestinian poetry in which literary historians have agreed it should be divided.

The first period encompasses the last decades of the 19th century through 1908. Palestinian poetry during this

period was "neo-classical" like the Arab literature of the time, seeking to return to its classical roots. The poetry was "religious or occasional" and according to Elmessiri "was a manifestation of a new, though still latent, Arab self-consciousness on both the literary and political levels."⁶ (This was also when, since the mid-1800's, the Jewish colonization of Palestine began to develop.)

The second period covers twelve years, from 1908-1920, a time of growing Arab identity and the development of a national struggle for liberation against the Turks. In hopes of realizing political independence, the Arabs sided with Britain against the Ottoman Empire. By 1917, however, the British had issued the Balfour Declaration favouring "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." From 1917-1920 Palestine was under British military occupation. The poetry during this period included poems about the image of Great Britain, land sales, the Balfour Declaration, feminism and Arab nationalism.

The third period, 1920-1940, between World Wars I and II, is significant because this is when the Palestinians developed a grass-roots movement of resistance against the Zionist and British colonizers. Here is where Palestinian resistance poetry has its true "origins". As Elmessiri points out:

The three leading poets of this period, Ibrahim Tuqan (older brother of Fadwa Tuqan,) Abu-Salma, and 'Abd al-Rahim Mahmud, took an active role in the revolution, not only by articulating the people's hopes and aspirations, but also by actually participating in the struggle.⁷

The Palestinian poetry of this period was characterized by particular themes, including the sale of land to the Jews, criticism of the traditional Palestinian leadership, elegies on dead fighters, and the prediction of the "disaster" (nakba).⁸

The fourth period of Palestinian poetry encompasses the years 1940-1956. The Palestinian resistance had been broken down and the Zionist State had been established. Elmessiri explains that: "The poetry of this period initially tended to be that of a helpless, hopeless diaspora, in which nebulous memories of the lost homeland haunt the imagination of the poets."⁹ Later during this period, perhaps as a result of the nationalist resurgence and anti-imperialist thrust in the Arab world, (in 1952 the Egyptians participated in a revolutionary uprising and in 1956 successfully resisted the invasion of the British, French and Israelis,) Palestinian poetry became more nationalistic like the resistance poetry of the third period.

The Palestinian poets who had grown up in Palestine prior to the establishment of Israel had received literary training in a "free" Palestine and had access to the

literature of the Arab world. Following the occupation of Palestine in 1948, the Israeli colonizers began to deny the Palestinians their history and culture. Given the fact that they were "left without intellectual leadership, separated from the rest of the Arab culture, and subjected to a variety of laws and regulations inherited from the days of the Ottoman Empire and British Mandate,"¹⁰ it is surprising that a new generation of Palestinian resistance poets developed within occupied Palestine/Israel.

It is this first phase of the fifth period of Palestinian poetry, 1960-1977, or in the case of this study 1967-1977, which will be examined in the following chapters. Why did a new generation of Palestinian resistance poets spring forth from within occupied Palestine/Israel and what was their response to the second Israeli occupation following the June 1967 war? What is the relationship of their poetry to Palestinian culture and history?

Notes for Chapter II:

1. R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.71.

2. Mounah Khouri and Hamid Algar, An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp.3-4.

3. Ibid., p.4.

4. Ibid., p.5.

5. Denys Johnson-Davies, editor, The Music of Human Flesh, (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1980), p.viii.

6. A.M. Elmessiri, trans., The Palestinian Wedding, (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1982), p.1.

7. Ibid., p.2.

8. Khalid A. Sulaiman, Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry, (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1984), pp.17-18.

9. Ibid., p.3.

10. Ibid., p.3.

CHAPTER III: PALESTINIAN OCCUPATION FOLLOWING THE 1967 WAR

Felicia Langer, an Israeli attorney who represents Palestinians living in the occupied territories, wrote of the devastation to the Palestinian people and their homeland following the June 1967 War. She was not only able to record the destruction that took place, but she was also able to feel the pulse of the Palestinians as they watched in terror, anger and sadness. In her book, With My Own Eyes, she records:

At the end of six days, little Israel became an empire: the West Bank of the Jordan, Arab Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip and Sinai! 'What a wonderful dowry!' thought the leaders happily. But the only bothersome thing was the bride that came with it---the Arabs living there. For what Israel wanted was, as Golda had put it, a maximum of territory with a minimum of inhabitantsThe Israelis strolling through the streets of Gaza, Jerusalem, and Nablus sensed the hateful looks, felt the hurt pride. 'We do not want you' shouted the eyes, before the hands had yet turned to pick up grenades. The conqueror understood that, inspite of the greatness of the victory, the bride did not like himThe resistance to the occupation did not stop for a moment, but external signs of quiet and smiles here and there soothed the victor. He did not hear the volcanic sounds under his charismatic power. Woe to the victor!¹

In less than one week the Israeli air force and army had dealt devastating blows to the Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi military forces. In addition, Israel had tripled the land area under its occupation. Israeli maps would no longer portray the Sinai, West Bank, Gaza Strip or

Golan Heights. Nor would they show these even as administered territories. Instead, the land became part of a united Israel. To the indigenous Arab Palestinian population, however, the land was still Palestine, their homeland. According to Langer, hundreds of thousands fled in terror. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reported that the number of refugees who fled the West Bank and Gaza was about 250,000. Very few of those who fled, (less than 20,000,) were ever able to repatriate. Many urged their families, friends and neighbors to remain, for fear of another exodus like the one in 1948.

If there were some Palestinians in the first days of the Israeli occupation who thought it would be short-lived, that soon changed. On June 7, following the capture of Jerusalem from the Jordanian army, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan said while standing before the Wailing Wall: "We have united Jerusalem...We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to be apart from it again."² Israel did not see itself as an occupying power because it considered the West Bank and Gaza as part of the historic "Eretz Israel". Israel claimed its conquest was defensive and that it drove out the illegal occupiers (Jordan and Egypt). On June 27, 1967, the Israeli Parliament passed a law enabling the administration to "extend the application of 'the law, jurisdiction and administration of the state

(of Israel) to any area of Eretz Israel designated by the government order."³

The international community, however, believed Israel should abide by the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention which covers the treatment of civilian persons in time of war. Article 2 of the Convention states that "they 'shall apply to all cases of belligerent conflict' and 'all cases of partial or total occupation of the territory of a High Contracting Party.'"⁴

Prohibited under the Geneva Convention were "forcible transfers or deportations" (article 49), which included both the deporting or transferring of the occupying authority's civilian population to the occupied territories and the deportation or expulsion of civilian persons to another country. Also prohibited were "any measures of brutality, whether applied by civilian or military agents (article 32); collective punishments, reprisals against protected persons or their property, and all measures of intimidation (article 33); unlawful confinement or deprivation of rights of fair and regular trial (article 147)."⁵

Although the Israeli Government did not agree with the applicability of the Geneva Convention, it said it would abide by the humanitarian aspects of the Convention. In

addition, the Military Law Collection of 1961, published by the Israeli Defense Force Headquarters, stated that:

The Hague Convention of 1907 is in practice observed by the whole civilized world and, as the various courts for war criminals stated after World War II, these regulations must be considered as proclaiming the uses of international lawThe State of Israel was not a party to the 1907 Hague Convention, yet it should be considered bound to the rules stated in it to the same extent as it is bound to observe the rules of international law.⁶

In section 3 entitled "Military Government in Occupied Territory", the Hague Convention states in paragraph 46:

"The honour of the family and its rights, the life of the individual and private property must be respected;" and in paragraph 50: "No collective punishment, monetary or otherwise, should be imposed on the population because of acts by individuals, since the population cannot be held responsible for them collectively."⁷

Israel followed neither the Geneva Convention nor the Hague Convention. Instead, Israel applied the Defense Emergency Regulations which were published by the British in 1937 and codified in 1945. These regulations give security authorities the power to act without due process of law. Israel adopted the Regulations in 1948 and used them against the Palestinian population in post-48 Israel. Following the 1967 War, Israel applied them to the Palestinian population in the post-67 Israeli occupied

territories. In addition to using these Regulations, Israel has used Israeli or Jordanian laws to carry out repressive measures against the indigenous population.

The rules and regulations of occupation have affected the economic, political, educational, social and religious life of the Palestinian people. Economically, for example, the Palestinians have suffered from confiscation and expropriation of their land. Water, vital to the Palestinian farmer, is controlled by Mekerot, the Israeli National Water Authority. Mekerot has allowed Israeli settlers to dig wells (many with high powered pumps) right next to springs used by Palestinian farmers for irrigating their fields, watering their animals, and for drinking water. Many of the wells have drained water away from the Palestinians who are prohibited from digging artesian wells. Mekerot has allowed Palestinians to construct a limited number of wells for drinking purposes only. The wells dug by Israelis in the West Bank, however, are used by Jewish settlers and by Israel. Permits are needed to open certain businesses such as banks, (from 1967-77 no permission had been granted to Palestinians,) insurance and publishing companies. Many professionals, such as lawyers, pharmacists, and surveyors, must obtain licenses that have been approved by the military authorities prior to practicing their profession. Collectively, merchants of a

city can be slapped with weeks of trade restrictions, (the movement of all import and export goods must be approved by the military authorities,) and foreign currencies can be banned for the administration and residents of a city; entire businesses can be closed down, and travel restrictions placed upon the residents of entire cities.

Politically and educationally the Palestinians have been affected in many ways. The occupation represents the outlawing of certain political parties, organizations, meetings, and assemblies. Freedom of thought and expression are affected through censorship or the removal from circulation of newspapers and magazines and making illegal the possession or distribution of certain literature, (including Palestinian songs and poems). Military Order Number 107 prohibits anyone in the West Bank from using any textbooks which appear in the Appendix to the Order, including about sixty school books on grammar, history, geography, philosophy, civic studies and Arabic literature. In addition, the Israeli military has the authority to close schools and universities for whatever reasons they choose, such as has been done following the display of Palestinian cultural exhibits and following student demonstrations. For Palestinians politically active, they can be "transferred" from one place to another, ("this was painfully true for about 20,000

Bedouins in Gaza, and many others elsewhere as well,")⁸ placed under administrative detention, arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and/or deported.

Particularly threatening to the Palestinians are administrative detention and deportation. The former is used when Palestinians are accused of violating the "security of the state." Under the British Defense Emergency Regulations, a Palestinian can be imprisoned for up to six months, with that time renewable for years. An Israeli soldier may arrest any person without a warrant or detaining order. Cases are heard in a military court before judges appointed by the military area commander, who are either military officers or civilian lawyers performing reserve duty. No one is certain about the number of people arrested in the occupied territories from 1967-1977; however, "informed sources in Israel estimate that by 1977 approximately 60% of the male population between the ages of 18 and 50 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had spent at least one night in prison after being arrested."⁹ The latter, deportation, means that a Palestinian is never allowed to return to his/her homeland again.

The social and religious life of Palestinians living under occupation has been equally affected by the military occupation. Not only did many Palestinians suffer from the

deaths of families and friends killed in the 1967 War, they also suffered from the destruction of their villages and homes. For those separated from their families and friends by the Israeli occupation, they must obtain permission from the military before leaving the occupied territories, even if only to spend the night with family members living within the pre-1967 borders of Israel. Family members or friends living outside the occupied territories (or visiting from one occupied territory to another) must also obtain a permit prior to visiting the area. Collective punishments include the destruction of Arab houses and villages as well as weeks of curfews placed upon villages and refugee camps. The establishment of cooperatives and charitable societies is determined by military officers who have the power to grant or refuse permits. What has caused perhaps the greatest devastation to the social and religious life of the Palestinians has been the destruction of their land. The connection between Palestinian and land is difficult for the observer who perceives through the lense of Western glasses. Palestinian poet and essayist Fawaz Turki explains the connection between the land and the community in his book Soul In Exile:

Over the centuries, in the summative
process of infinite individual

Over the centuries, in the summative process of infinite individual adaptations in our social system that we call communal meaning, a notion has emerged---a notion whose origins are buried in time---that there truly exists a mystical affinity between people and their land or environment, an interactive relationship that touches on the very core of every impulse in their human and social condition

The foundation of Palestinian culture and inner history, as expressed in literature, poetry, rhetoric, folk tales, song, dance, and political theory, is rooted in this worldview of man and land as two components of the same system, expressing the life process. In this worldview, "el umma", the community, and "el ard", the environment, are two interdependent subsystems, never separable in their functions--- for they, together, make up a unified, biospheric system of life-facts that can be separated only by abstraction. A man estranged from his land is, in effect, repudiated as a human being.¹⁰

The response of the Palestinian population to the June 1967 War and the occupation which followed was only human: shock, sadness, anguish, rage, humiliation. Beyond their feelings, however, they also knew that if they were to survive they would have to take responsibility for their own lives. Responsibility in this case meant organization. West Bank community health worker and teacher, Rita Giacaman, explains what organization for survival meant during those first ten years of occupation following the 1967 war:

The first ten years of occupation or so everybody worked very hard to inhibit the breakdown of the infrastructure, the economic, social, health, educational and political infrastructures in the West Bank. It was clear to Palestinians that this attempt on the part of the Israeli military to break down the social and economic infrastructures really meant a fight for survival. That infrastructure, we all knew, was crucial for the reconstruction of Palestinian society in the future. We knew that much. We knew that the Israeli military was out to possess the land without us people. We knew that, too. What we didn't know was how to mobilize under occupation, when it was becoming practically impossible to move and do anything at the political or other levels without being subjugated to arrests or attacks from the Israeli military.¹¹

Attempts at mobilization took different forms in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1950, the West Bank had been formally annexed by Jordan. In 1957, King Hussein banned all political parties. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), formed by the League of Arab States in 1964, had been allowed to open an office in Jerusalem. By 1965, however, the office was forced to close. King Hussein did not allow the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA), the Palestinians' first regular army, into Jordan. For these reasons, the political resistance within the West Bank was not highly organized or developed. Nevertheless, political activists began to form committees for the purpose of organizing political resistance to the occupation. Attorneys, students and school teachers

organized demonstrations and strikes. The Israeli Government was quick to respond with arrests and deportations. In December 1967, three key leaders were deported and committees in Jerusalem and Jenin were destroyed. Anyone who was seen as disrupting the Israeli plans was deported. Even the more conservative, pro-Hashemite leaders were deported. Two of those included the President of the Islamic Court of Appeals, Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid al-Sayigh, and Jerusalem mayor, Rouhi Khatib. Although the practice of deportation was illegal, (as cited earlier,) the Israeli Government continued with its employment. Helena Cobban writes, in her book The Palestinian Liberation Organization, that: "One researcher has documented the cases of 671 individual West Bank residents, and two entire tribes, deported to Jordan or Lebanon over the period 1967-78 ... 25% of them were educators, 22% were students and 15% were non-teaching professionals."¹²

Other Palestinians chose armed struggle as a means of resistance. At least in the beginning, this form was less successful in the West Bank than in Gaza. In the weeks following the June War, Fath, Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya (the Palestinian Liberation Movement), under the leadership of 'Abu Ammar or Yasser Arafat, undertook guerrilla actions which were unsuccessful and resulted in

their being chased out of the West Bank later that same year.

In Gaza, however, the years 1967-71 were marked by armed resistance. There are several important reasons why the period lasted longer in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Palestinians had experienced occupation under the Israelis for four months in 1956 when the Israeli, French and British forces invaded Egypt. The occupation was particularly brutal. For example, in the town of Khan Yunis, Israelis massacred Palestinian youths in front of their mothers and fathers. Secondly, the popular resistance had the help of Palestinian student leaders from Cairo who had participated in forming an underground network to resist occupation. Thirdly, the Egyptian Government had allowed the Arab Nationalist Movement leaders to organize openly prior to 1967. The Government had also allowed the Palestine Liberation Army to recruit members in Gaza. Following the June 1967 War, weapons were hidden in the towns and refugee camps in Gaza.

By 1971, the Israeli military had put an end to the armed resistance by establishing 24-hour curfews, conducting door-to-door searches, killing leaders, deporting as many as 12,000 people to detention camps in the Sinai, bulldozing streets, and demolishing homes and refugee camps.

The attempts of the Israeli Government to destroy the resistance only heightened the determination of the Palestinians to hold on, to persevere, to be samidīn---the steadfast ones. As samidīn they did have some successes. Having chased the Fath guerrillas out of the West Bank in 1967, the Israelis continued to make raids against guerrillas living in the East Bank of Jordan. In mid-March 1968, Fath leaders learned from Jordanian intelligence, (who had received the information from the U.S. C.I.A.) that Israel was planning a major attack upon Karameh, a village near the River Jordan where Fath had established its command network. Although they were advised to leave the area by Jordan, the guerrillas chose to remain and fight because: "The Palestinians, and more generally the Arabs, would never understand if once again we left the field open to the Israelis. Our duty was to set an example, to prove that the Arabs are capable of courage and dignity."¹³ With only 300 Fath fighters, (and assistance from the Jordanian artillery,) they were able to defend Karameh against approximately 15,000 Israeli troops. Palestinians and Arabs across the world felt that their karama, or "honor," had also been defended. Cobban records that "5,000 new recruits applied to join Fatah within the next 48 hours."¹⁴

Another form of resistance for the Palestinians was their poetry. The poetry that emerged following the 1967 War expresses the feelings of shock, sadness, anguish, rage, and humiliation experienced by the Palestinian people. However the poetry also speaks of the Palestinian identity and their refusal to accept the disaster as a "setback, as it was called in the Arab world."¹⁵ The resistance poetry of the Palestinians tells of the wounds they have suffered as well as the hope they find in the midst of their pain. It is a poetry which expresses the iltizām or commitment of the freedom fighters to be ṣamidīn, the steadfast ones who use every means possible to hold on to the homes, the lands, the lives of the Palestinian people. And it is a poetry of resistance which also speaks of woman's place within the struggle against occupation.

Notes for Chapter III:

1. Felicia Langer, With My Own Eyes, (London: Ithaca Press, 1975), pp. 2-5.
2. Jan Metzger, Martin Orth, and Christian Sterzing, This Land is Our Land, (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 138.
3. Ibid., p. 138.
4. Ibid., p. 62.
5. American Friends Service Committee, A Compassionate Peace, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), pp. 26-27.
6. Langer, With My Own Eyes, p. 166.
7. Ibid., p. 165.
8. Edward W. Said, The Question of Palestine, (New York: Vintage Press, 1980), p. 136.
9. Metzger, Orth and Sterzing, This is Our Land, p. 67.
10. Fawaz Turki, Soul In Exile, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988), p. 65.
11. Rita Giacaman, "Women, Resistance and the Popular Movement," Palestine Focus, (July-August, 1987), 3.
12. Helena Cobban, The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 170-171.
13. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
14. Ibid., p. 42.
15. Naseer Aruri and Edmund Ghareeb, editors, Enemy of the Sun, (Washington: Drum and Spear Press, 1970), p. xxvii.

CHAPTER IV: THE IDENTITY THEME

One of the major themes of Palestinian resistance poetry is Palestinian identity. This theme plays an extremely important role within Palestinian society, especially for those living under occupation, because so much of what a Palestinian experiences in day to day life is threatened with extinction. Professor Edward Said writes in his book The Question of Palestine that:

much of what Palestinians do, and much of what they think about, concerns Palestinian identity. I am hesitant to call this introspection, because it has not been exclusively a matter of self-examination, but largely a political question of the first moment.¹

Probably the most famous poem of Mahmoud Darwish which portrays the identity theme is his poem entitled "Identity Card". According to Said:

If there is anything written by a Palestinian that can be called a national poem, it would have to be Mahmoud Darwish's short work "Bitaqit Hawia" ("Identity Card"). The curious power of this little poem is that at the time it appeared in the late sixties, it did not represent as much as embody the Palestinian, whose political identity in the world had been pretty much reduced to a name on an identity card.²

The poet begins with a command:

Record!
 I am an Arab
 and my Identity Card
 is number fifty thousand
 I have eight children
 and the ninth
 is coming in midsummer
 Will you be angry?

In this first stanza, Darwīsh portrays the sumūd stance. His steadfastness is reflected in his determination to conceive children. His identity is reflected in his decision to continue creating new generations of Palestinians. The relationship between ancestry and identity is woven into the poem two stanzas later.

Record!
 I am an Arab
 without a name---without a title
 patient in a country
 with people enraged
 My roots---
 were entrenched before the birth of
 time
 and before the opening of the
 eras
 before the olive trees, the
 pines and grass
 My father---
 descends from the family of the
 plow
 not from a privileged class
 And my grandfather---
 was a farmer
 neither well-bred, nor well-born
 And my house---
 is like a watchman's hut
 made of branches and cane
 This is my status
 Does it satisfy you?
 I have a name but no title.

In this stanza, Darwīsh has also expressed his identity in his attachment to the land. This is not just any land, but the land of Palestine. Most Western readers (from largely mobile societies with an urban/suburban experience) will have difficulty comprehending the Palestinian deep love for and commitment to the land. But it is a major component of the Palestinian identity.

Perhaps this can best be understood by the fact that historically Palestinians were largely a poor, fallāh, peasant class organized into village units who lived and died by the land. Even under the British occupation, Palestinian society was mainly a peasant society. Rosemary Sayigh, in her study Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries, records that:

The first British census of 1921 found that 80% of the indigenous population depended on agriculture, while for the Muslim majority the figure was even higher, 90% (Christians, Jews, and other minorities being mainly urban). Palestine's small bedouin component (semi-sedentarized) shared the same general conditions and poverty as the peasant class. And in spite of Jewish immigration and the growth of industry and urbanization, by 1948 two-thirds of Palestine's Arab population was still rural. There is thus good reason to regard Palestinian society as a peasant society, and its struggle for liberation a peasant-based struggle.³

This intimate tie and holding-on to the land of Palestine is generational as expressed in Darwīsh's poem. Like his ancestors before him, he is not a member of an elite, privileged class. Darwīsh is the peasant, the worker. He continually reminds the reader of his Arab identity while pointing out his distinct Palestinian reality. He continues:

My favorite meal
is olive oil and zatar
And my address:
A village---isolated and deserted
where streets have no names
and the men---work in the fields and quarries
They like socialism
Will you be angry?

Record!
I am an Arab
You have stolen the orchards
of my ancestors
and the land
which I cultivated
along with my children.
And you left us with those rocks.
So will the state take them
as it has been said?

Therefore!
Record on top of the first page:
I do not hate men
Nor do I encroach
But if I become hungry
The usurper's flesh will be my food
Beware---Beware---of my hunger
and my anger! (NA&EG)

Olive oil and thyme, zātar, are symbolic for the Palestinian. Olive trees and thyme are Palestine. Acres and acres of Palestinian olive trees have been destroyed by the Israeli occupiers and replaced by Israeli settlements and parks. Orchards have been bulldozed just because one member of a family has been suspected of being a dissident. Even the gathering of thyme that grows wild in the hills may be an act of resistance for one can wind up in military detention for such an act.

In the last stanza of this poem, the Palestinian emerges, self-assured, confident and warning the occupier. Earlier, the poet speaks of his patience, but the poem ends with his unwillingness to continue the Palestinian experience of occupation. It is the oppression and exploitation the poet and his people suffer under occupation which gives birth to the spirit of defiance and resistance.

As Darwīsh continues to portray the theme of Palestinian identity in his poetry, he continually returns to the Palestinians' attachment to the land and the loss of Palestine to the Zionists. In many of his poems Palestine is his lover in a relationship that is never fulfilled. In his classic poem "A Lover From Palestine", published in 1964 when he was twenty-two years old, Darwīsh fully develops this theme. In his poems following the 1967 War,

the poet continues to portray Palestine and Palestinian as inseparable. In the poem "Homeland" he writes:

Suspend me on the tresses of a date palm
Hang me---I shall not betray the palm.

This land is mine and long ago
In good mood and in bad, I'd milk
camels.

My homeland is no bundle of legends.
It is not a memory, not a field of
crescent moons.

My homeland is not some story or anthem,
Nor light on the boughs of some jasmine
bush.

My homeland is the anger of the exile at
being made to grieve.
A child wanting festivities and a kiss.

And winds confined within a prison cell,
An old man mourning his sons, his field.

This land is the skin on my bones,
And my heart
Flies above its grasses like a bee.

Suspend me on the tresses of a date palm.
Hang me---I shall not betray the palm.
(DJ-D)

For the Jews who immigrated to Palestine, the land was foreign, "a land that has existed for them as an intellectual concept, a hope, a solution to their predicament, a fulfillment of what they believe to be a promise."⁴ For the Palestinian, however, the homeland is not an abstract concept like a myth or legend, like a story or a memory. It is a concrete part of the Palestinian, from which s/he is unable to separate her/himself, "the

skin of my bones, and my heart flies above its grasses like a bee." This relationship between the land and the Palestinian is portrayed by the symbol of the palm tree which begins and ends the poem. Darwish communicates to the reader here, as in his other poems, through his directness, expressing the day to day reality of the child who ends up in a prison cell, of the farmer mourning the loss of his sons and his field. In this, he is like his pre-Islamic ancestors, whose poetry expressed what they observed and what they experienced in the outside world.

The poetry of Samīh al-Qāsim is also filled with the theme of Palestinian identity. In fact, he says, "the only way I can assert my identity is by writing poetry."⁵

In his poem "I, Pronoun of the Speaker" Palestinian identity is the overall theme. He begins the poem with:

I am the hunger of him who has worked
since dawn,
I am the song of return.
I am the road into the fields,
I am thousands of brown palms
Coming to rest on door handles.
I am the promises, the shouts of joy.
The tears embroidered on the handkerchief
of exile.

Though al-Qāsim uses the first person singular "I", the reader understands he not only speaks for himself but for all Palestinians. He cannot separate the two. Like the pre-Islamic poets, he is recording the experiences held in common by both poet and listener. As Naseer Aruri and

Edmund Ghareeb point out in their book Enemy of the Sun:

....it is not surprising to see the poet's personal experiences are the same as those of the people as a whole. The poetry becomes the expression of a whole people and not only of the individual or of a small segment of society.⁶

Al-Qāsim is the exploited worker unable to make enough money to feed his family; the Palestinian forced into exile, yearning to return; he and his people are the promise.

The poet then moves on to present what is Palestine and Palestinian. He too expresses the intimate connection between human being and land.

I am the mint on the hills.
 I am the spring, the rose cane.
 I am the deserted place
 And the roof---
 I am the ear of wheat.
 I am the trees, the robin.
 I am the tanned shepherd, the flute.
 I am the wet breeze in the sea,
 The sails, the night trip, the shore.
 I am the waiting for the absent child.
 I am the strip of land, the plow.
 I am the strength of the peasant
 Working in the earth.
 And, out of my flesh a garden grows
 And the children, and bread, and books!

Al-Qāsim weaves his story, the Palestinian story, throughout the rest of this poem. "One year falls upon another and my face falls in the dust. One year falls upon another and my dialogue continues," he writes.

In the last lines of the poem, the poet ends as a sāmid, as a hopeful resister:

Well---
 For the twentieth time: Thanks.
 Someday at the seat of the UN
 The world will commemorate my eagles,
 My massacre with a crown of thorns.
 Someday, with my hands
 I will transform the image. (NA&EG)

Without a homeland, a Palestinian nation, the Palestinians are unable to participate as equals among other member nations of the United Nations. Al-Qāsim gives a cynical thanks and, at once, a warning to the world as he celebrates his identity. "The world will commemorate my eagles," he writes. Here eagles are a symbol of rebellion and freedom. In the following line the poet uses Christian symbolism as a metaphor for the Palestinian reality. Jesus was rejected in his time, and, in a similar place, was mocked with a crown of thorns placed upon his head by the Roman soldiers prior to his crucifixion. Only many years later was he lifted up as a beloved messiah/prophet, with the crown of thorns becoming a symbol of his martyrdom. So too, the poet says, will the image of the Palestinian change. For the rest of the world, at least the Western world, that image is often one of a terrorist or homeless refugee. But the poet says that the Palestinian himself, becoming an active participant in his own history, will "transform the image."

One of the greatest acts of resistance for the Palestinian is to refuse to give in to the Zionist dream of "a land without a people for a people without a land". To remain on the land is an act of preserving the Palestinian identity. To stay put is not a static, inactive position, but instead it is active resistance. In Darwish's poem "To My Grandfather", the land and the grandfather are symbols of dignity. The grandfather rooted in the land, the grandson springing from the root of his grandfather. To preserve the spirit of his grandfather, Darwish must preserve the land; he must be a sāmid. This is the greatest gift he can give his grandfather, who was also a sāmid...who may have died because of his steadfastness. Darwish writes:

Old cheerless prophet!
 What grave has sent you forth?
 Your vest is the color
 Of a blood-stained rock;
 Your cloak the color of a ditch.

Old cheerless prophet!
 What grave has sent you forth
 To freeze me into a statue?
 Your sorrow scars the fields.
 You carry the dead on ancient winds.

God is my witness!
 I haven't sold an inch
 Of this land.
 I haven't succumbed to oppression.

Old cheerless prophet!
 They sang and danced on your grave.
 You may sleep now,
 For I'm awake,
 Awake until death. (BB)

When Darwish writes "I haven't sold an inch of this land", he isn't referring only to the personal property of his grandfather, but to the land of Palestine. Again, this intimate connection between Palestinian and Palestine is tied to the personal and communal Palestinian identity. This is why Palestinian refugees refuse to be permanently "resettled" in other Arab countries. Fawaz Turki writes in his book Soul in Exile of an English journalist who meets a Palestinian peasant who had spent almost his entire life on the land (Acre, Palestine) before fleeing to Lebanon following the 1948 war. She asks Abu Samir: "But why, why must you go back to Palestine? Why Palestine specifically?" Abū Samir responds:

Sister, let me tell you this. The land is where our ancestors were born, died, and are now buried. We are from that land. The stuff of our bones and our soul comes from there. We and the soil are one. Every grain of my land carries the memories of all our ancestors within it. And every part of of me carries the history of that land within it. The land of others does not know me. I am a stranger to it and it is a stranger to me. 'Ardi-aardi'.⁷

Preserving the Palestinian identity requires vigilance; vigilance until death. Thus the poet ends his poem by assuring his grandfather: "You may sleep now, for I'm awake, awake until death." Preserving the Palestinian identity, however, also requires sacrifice. The occupying power, Israel, inflicts many wounds upon the Palestinian

people in its determination to deny indigenous culture and prevent the Palestinians from shaping their own history. To understand the Palestinian identity then, one must understand how the wounds that they suffer give them strength and new life to persevere in their resistance.

Notes for Chapter IV:

1. Said, Question of Palestine, p.155.
2. Ibid., p.155.
3. Rosemary Sayigh, Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries, (London: Zed Books, Ltd. 1979), p.6.
4. Johnson-Davies, Music of Human Flesh, p.x.
5. al-Udhari, Victims of a Map, p.50.
6. Aruri and Ghareeb, Enemy of the Sun, p.xlvii.
7. Turki, Soul in Exile, pp.49-50.

CHAPTER V: THE WOUND THEME

The wound theme present in Palestinian resistance poetry following the June War of 1967 arises out of the everyday experience of occupation. The suffering inflicted by the wound is both personal and communal, afflicting both Palestinian and Palestine. Whether the wound is chosen or not, it becomes a dynamic force which transforms the lives of the Palestinians.

The poetry of Fadwā Ṭūqān following the June War is filled with the wound theme. Her first dīwān, (a collection of poetry by a single author or in ancient times by a number of authors from the same tribe or class,) to be written immediately following the June War is entitled "Al-lail wa 'l-fursān", "The Night and the Knights." Published in Beirut in 1969, it is dedicated to the fidā'ī Filistīnī, the Palestinian martyr/fighter. Described as "a confirmation of the 'voice of the (Palestine) resistance'"¹, Ṭūqān's poetry is written out of her own experience of occupation. She begins the dīwān with: "words from the West Bank."

The first poem of this dīwān, "My Sad City", describes the "day of the Zionist occupation". She writes:

The day we saw death and betrayal
 The tide withdrew
 And the windows of heaven closed
 And the city held its breath.

Day of the wave of defeat, forsaken day
 The grotesqueness of the bottom of the sea
 Uncovered its face to the light.

Hopes are burned to ashes
 And my sad city
 Is choked by the torment of being put to
 the test.

The wounds suffered are death, betrayal, and defeat. The Palestinians felt betrayed by the Arab military who withdrew from the battlefield as the tide withdraws from the shoreline. Professor Edward Said explains the betrayal this way: "I have said that the 1967 war was a momentous event. Not only did it discredit the conventional Arab approach to Israel; it also made clear to most Palestinians that their quarrel with Zionism could not be resolved on their behalf by proxy armies and states."² The city is personified by holding its breath and later being choked. There is no sign of hope in these lines; even God, it seems, has turned away: "the windows of heaven closed".

The poet continues:

Children and songs died away
 No shadow; no echo
 The sadness in my city creeps heavily, bare
 Its steps are smeared with blood
 The silence in my city
 The silence, like mountains resting
 Like the night hiding, the tragic silence
 Carrying
 News of death and destruction
 Oh my silent, mourning city
 Is it so that in the season of gathering
 the harvest
 The crops and fruit are burned?
 Moaning, oh end to the final destination.

(PH)

Children and songs, symbols of life and celebration, are gone. Nothing remains of them, neither shadow nor echo. The sadness of the city is described as a creeping, wounded animal whose steps are colored with blood. This is not a tranquil, peaceful silence but the dreaded silence that brings news of death and destruction. Tuḡan expresses her attachment to the land by expressing her sadness that the summer harvest, which normally brings abundance and signifies ongoing life, is burned. The war has brought death even to the crops in the fields.

In the second poem of this collection, entitled "The Plague," Ṭuḡān compares the Zionist occupation to "the plague that spread in my city." Instead of citing a litany of death and destruction, however, the poet moves on to supplication.

The day that the plague spread in my city
 I went out to the barrenness
 Opened my chest to the heavens
 Shouted from the depth of my sad heart:
 Move me and make the clouds travel in our
 direction, oh spirit,
 And bring the rain
 Cleansing the air in my city
 And wash the houses and the mountains and
 the trees
 Bring the clouds in our direction, oh
 spirit
 And let the rain come!
 And let the rain come!
 And let the rain come! (PH)

She goes out in the midst of the plague and the destruction. She opens her chest to the heavens so that God can see the depth of her anguish and so she can pray. There is a sense of hope in the poet as she asks for rain to cleanse the city, the land, and herself. The rain, a pre-Islamic symbol meaning either assistance or destruction, is used here to symbolize help and new life. In the desert, where water is scarce, it represents life. In her litany, "let the rains come!" Ṭūqān expresses a sign of hope that the rains will come.

In several of her poems in this same dīwān, Ṭūqān portrays the wounds inflicted upon relationships. In her "Letter To Two Children On The East Bank (to Karema and 'Amr)", she explains: "I wrote this poem in the first months of the Zionist occupation. In those days the bridges between the two banks were blown up and the crossing forbidden. And during those months each day dozens of victims, who were trying to swim across the river, were killed by passing bullets." (PH) This poem tells of the pain of separation between the poet and two children who are very dear to her. They live on the East Bank and she remains imprisoned on the West Bank, forbidden to cross. She writes:

Oh my Karema, I wish I could fly
 On the wing of longing I wish I could fly
 However longing, my little one, is
 shackled, captive

I am unable, oh my Karema, to cross
 And the river cuts the way between us.
 And they are here lining up
 Like a black curse they are here lining up
 They have blown up the bridges
 And they deprive me of you my little one
 And they prohibit the crossing.

Death perches upon the river
 Death waits for everyone who crosses
 Oh Karema, oh my gazelle
 The pure honey shines in your eyes
 I long so much for you
 And the cluster of blonde hair like wheat,
 like---
 The seas of harvest in our fields
 I miss it, I miss it so much
 I wish I could fly oh my gazelle
 Across the expanse, I wish I could fly.
 (PH)

Again, the poet weaves together her attachment to the two children with her attachment to the land. Karema she compares to the wheat in the fields. The Israeli military is portrayed as a black curse lining up upon the land, prohibiting the crossing, preventing the poet from seeing the children.

In the poem "To My Strange Friend" the poet shares more wounds of death, terror, and defeat. The "strange friend" is the Israeli occupier:

My strange friend
 If only my path to you were as it was
 yesterday
 If only the deadly serpent was not
 Spreading terror in every path
 Digging a grave for my family and my people
 Sowing death and fire
 If only the defeat was not pouring rain
 now---

On the land of my country
 Stones of disgrace and shame

If only my heart, which you know,
 Were as it was in the past, not dripping
 Its blood on the dagger of defeat
 If only I were, my friend, as yesterday
 Then I would prove by my people and my
 house and my strength
 Then I would be beside you now---
 upon the shores of your love, anchoring
 Ship of my life
 We are like two hatched pigeons.... (PH)

Beyond the intense sadness, disgrace and shame Ṭūqān expresses because of the wounds of terror and death sown by the Israeli occupiers, the poet seems to be reaching back to a time (prior to the formation of the modern state of Israel) when indigenous Palestinian Arabs and Jews were able to live together harmoniously, in a land they both loved. One might wonder if, amidst the wounds inflicted, there can be friendship between occupier and occupied.

Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian lawyer who lives and works in the occupied West Bank, writes of the difficulty, near impossibility, of friendship between colonizer and colonized. In his book Samed: Journal of a West Bank Palestinian he writes:

Like other samidīn, I have acquired---in addition to the straightforward mistrust of the colonizer's smile---a deeper and more painful suspicion of friendly overtures made by Israelis who proclaim themselves against the occupation. For it very often happens that the gesture of friendship is no more than a request for a pat on the back to salve the unhappy Israeli's conscience, or else you are being used as fodder for someone with a theory of world revolution, etc.³

Yet Shehadeh does become friends, very slowly, with Enoch, an Israeli. He later continues:

Enoch once wrote to me: 'When I think of Enoch the individual meeting Raja the individual I feel no tension. When I think of Enoch the Jew encountering Raja the Palestinian, I feel tension and conflict of interest, of history, of murder. At first, I feel anger because the political situation may rob me of Raja my friend, because I can no longer meet him under these conditions, and because under these conditions my friend will cease to exist. But in more optimistic moods, I believe that I will be able to meet Raja the Palestinian as a friend and as a comrade. Yet, we are not masters of our own fate.'And it is this oscillation between hope and despair that hovers over the times we spend together.⁴

It is this mixture of despair and hope that Tūqān brings together in her poem "To My Friend." Despair: rain once symbolizing life now symbolizes defeat and destruction; a "strange friend" spreads terror, digs graves for the Palestinian people, and sinks the dagger of defeat into the Palestinian heart. And hope: "If only I were, my friend, as yesterday", I would prove, my people would prove, our existence would prove we could live side by side in a land we both love ("the shores of your love"). The poem ends with that note of hope and possibility: "We are like two hatched pigeons..."

After the 1967 War old wounds were also reopened as the Palestinians relived the 1947-49 War and the establishment of the state of Israel. For eventhough

Palestinians in the occupied territories needed permits to visit friends and relatives living in Israel, it was still possible. One of the ironies of the Israeli occupation was that for the first time in twenty years Palestinians living within the boundaries of Mandate Palestine (inhabitants of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza) were now living "together" under Israeli military rule. In addition, the physical barriers that had been in place for twenty years separating Palestinians living within the boundaries of 1948 Israel ("Israeli Arabs") and those living under Hashemite Jordanian rule on the West Bank and Egyptian rule in Gaza were immediately removed. Helena Cobban points out:

For the first time in two decades they could reach out from the social and political isolation to which their citizenship of Israel had confined them and come into contact with virtually intact Arab societies in the West Bank, Gaza and (to a lesser extent) the Golan and Sinai.⁵

This gathering together was both painful and joyful.

The power of this sudden connection between these two groups of Palestinians who had been geographically, politically and socially isolated is illustrated in two poems, one written by Fadwā Tūqān and the other written by Maḥmūd Darwīsh. On March 4, 1968, Fadwā Tūqān, one of the first to visit Israel after the June War, went to Haifa and met Maḥmūd Darwīsh and other Palestinian poets at a

clandestine gathering. Not long after that meeting, Ṭūqān wrote the poem "I Will Not Cry," which she dedicated as a gift to "the poets of the resistance of the occupied land for twenty years." (PH) (The "occupied land" here refers to the pre-'67 borders of the state of Israel.) In the poem, Ṭūqān is the Palestinian grieving from the 1967 War who is feeling desperate and hopeless about her people's past, present, and future. But she is also the Palestinian aware of her Arab identity who has come to be with those she admires and looks up to for their sense of Palestinian identity and continuous resistance and steadfastness. Suffering from the wounds, she comes to gain strength and hope. She knows she must not cry, she must not give in for she too has a role to play in the midst of the tragedy.

The poet laces pre-Islamic images throughout the poem, beginning upon the ruins of Jaffa from the 1947-49 War, as she recalls her Arab roots by adopting lines from the Mu'allaga (suspended ode) of the well-known pre-Islamic poet Imru'u 'l-Qays.⁶

On the doors of Jaffa, oh my dear friends
 And in the chaos of the rubble of the
 houses
 Between the rubble and the thorns
 I stood there and said to my eyes:
 Let us halt friends on the ruins
 Of those who left
 The house calls those who built it
 And the house laments those who built it
 And the heart moaned, crushed

And the heart said
 What did the days do to you
 Oh house?
 And where are the residents here
 Did it come to you after the departure,
 Have you received the news?

Ṭūqān expresses the wounds suffered from the war. She moves on to ask what happened to the dreams, plans and projects of the inhabitants of Jaffa. There is no response except that of the "formless figures" who are "foreign" and move in giving orders, "extending roots in the house." Again, the poet connects the wounds suffered with her own identity attached to the house and the land; the Zionists are foreigners and the Palestinians are indigenous. Then, embarrassed by her tears, Ṭūqān moves on to express the importance of this connection between the Palestinians of 1948 Israel with the Palestinians of the new Israeli occupation:

My dear friends
 I wipe the mist of tears from my grey
 eyelid
 So I can meet you
 And in my eyes a light of love
 And the faith
 In all of you, in the land, in the
 humanity.
 Oh how embarrassed I would be if I were to
 come
 To meet you
 My moist eyelids shaking
 And my heart hopeless and foresaken.

And look, oh my dear friends
 In order to borrow live coals from you
 To take
 The lights of darkness from---
 A drip of your oil
 For my lamp.

Again, Ṭūqān uses pre-Islamic images (live coals, a drip of oil) to express this connection.

She continues to portray her identity as connected to Palestine. Just as post-'48 and post-'67 Palestinians are inseparable, so too are they both rooted in the land.

And there I am, oh dear friends
 I extend my hand to your hand
 I put down my head where your heads are.
 And I raise my forehead with you to the sun
 And here you are strong as the rocks of our
 Mountains
 Like the flowers of our lovely country.
 And how come the injury is crushing me?
 And how come the hopelessness crushes me?
 I swear, after that day I'll never cry.

Though the first half of the poem reverberates between hopelessness and hopefulness, the reader must not be misled into thinking the poet is ambivalent and unsure of her direction or capacity to respond. As in many of her other poems, Ṭūqān develops the theme of resurrection from the wounds, of resistance to destruction and death. She uses the horse to symbolize freedom, rebellion, and rejuvenation. Again, this is a symbol used by many pre-Islamic poets including Imru'u 'l-Qays and Antara. To explain the transformation from the pain and death of the wound to resurrection and new life, Ṭūqān uses the symbols

of the melting ruby (its blood) and the severed limb given as sustenance to the horse; that is, the horse feeds on the blood and death of the martyrs. She also uses the grains of wheat which die and are planted in order to be reborn. It is in the wound, then, where "the secret of the leaven" or the rising up is found.

Oh my dear friends, the horse of the people
 rose from
 Yesterday's fall.
 Suddenly the noble one rose up indignantly
 Shaking off behind the river.
 Listen here is the people's horse.
 He whinnys confident of his desires
 And he escapes from the ominous siege
 And he gallops in the direction of his
 harbor in the sun
 And those meetings of the knights who
 stayed together
 They bless him and sacrifice him
 And from the melting of the ruby and from
 The blood of the precious stone they give
 him to drink
 And from the abundance of the severed limb
 he is given to feed.
 And they call out to the noble horse
 galloping
 Oh horse of the people
 And you the symbol and the flag
 And behind you, the army
 The tide and the agitation and the rage
 Will never retreat from the tide
 The fatigue will never spread in the
 battlefield
 Over our forehead
 And we will never rest
 Until we drive away the phantoms
 And the crows and the darkness.

My dear friends, lights of darkness

My brother

In the wound...
Oh secret of the leaven, oh seeds of wheat
He dies here in order to give us

And to give us
And to give us
On your path I shall follow you
And I shall plant, like you, two feet in my
country
And in my land
And I shall plant, like you, my eyes
In a path of light and the sun. (PH)

Mahmūd Darwīsh responded to Fadwā Ṭūqān's poem with a poem entitled "Diary Of A Palestinian Wound". Darwīsh begins the poem by addressing the intimate connection between Palestinian and Palestine and by clarifying the role of the Palestinian poet.

We exist in the flesh of our country and it
in us.

Before June we weren't like little doves
which is why our love wasn't crushed among
the chains.
O sister, we've existed for twenty years.
We haven't been writing poetry but
struggling.

Throughout much of the poem Darwīsh is answering questions raised by Ṭūqān in her poem. He asks and answers her question:

Where are my people? They quit the tent of
exile and returned
Yet again as captives.

As mentioned earlier, for Darwish the land is the beloved. In these rubâ'iyât, the beloved is both Ṭūqān and Palestine. In 1967, Fadwā Ṭūqān was fifty years old, twice the age of Maḥmūd Darwish. Yet their relationship was very strong. In the sixth stanza, Darwish addresses the beloved Ṭūqān and the Beloved Palestine:

Love-words didn't rust but the beloved
Collapses into captivity/ O Beloved you
loaded me
with balconies torn loose by wind/
porches of houses and guilts.
Once my heart could hold nothing but your
eyes
And now it's enriched with the homeland.

Darwish moves on to lift up the wound theme. The wound is dynamic. It is blessing and sacrifice. It is at once martyrdom and death, and life and liberation. In stanzas nine, ten, and eleven, the poet presents the wound and the fidā'i (here referred to as "his"), the one who sacrifices, thus receiving the wound. The reader can feel that the wound, for the Palestinian, is positive pain; it is a sign of hope.

Because of his face
a summer and an unnatural pulse
have broken into my blood.
I came home abashed/
the house collapsed upon a
martyr's gash
It was the Christmas manger
it was hope
And I was gleaning a festival from the
memory of it.

His eyes were dew and fire
 And if I drew near his face it sang
 And I evaporated on its arm: a moment of
 silence and prayer.
 Oh call it 'a martyr' if you wish.
 It's more beautiful than we are.
 It left its hovel a youth then returned in
 its own time
 the face of a god!

This land which sucks the skin of martyrs
 promises wheat and stars to the summer
 so worship it: we are salt and water in its
 bowels
 and in its embrace a wound which is
 fighting!

In the fourteenth stanza the poet weaves together the wound theme with the identity theme as expressed in his attachment to the land in four beautiful lines, that, according to Ian Wedde and Fawwaz Tūqān (nephew of Fadwā Tūqān), have "come to have the force of a popular slogan. Among the many lines of Darwish that have passed into street language these are perhaps the best known."⁷

O brave-faced wound
 my homeland isn't a suitcase
 and I'm not a traveller.
 I am the lover and the land is the beloved.

The wound is suffered for a reason. As Tūqān expresses in the previous poem, there must be meaning in the wound. Darwish writes:

My forehead doesn't carry the shadow
 and I can't see my own
 And I spit in the wound which fails
 to set fire to the night with foreheads.

Save your tears for the festival: we'll cry
 from nothing but joy.
 Come let's call sudden death in the square
 a wedding and a life!

And later the poet reminds his sister poet that the
 wounds of 1948 and 1967 are one and the same:

There had to be enemies for us to find we
 were twins.
 There had to be wind for us to live in the
 trunks of oaks.
 And if the crucified Lord hadn't come of
 age on the throne of the cross
 he'd have remained a child whose wound was
 forfeit: a coward.

Here the Christian symbolism informs the reader that the
 wound is not an isolated incident that just happens. It is
 a direct result of involvement in the struggle for a free
 Palestine. As Ian Wedde and Fawwaz Tuqan point out: "he is
 drawing our attention to the idea that Christ sought the
 cross."⁸

For Darwish the wound also represents the stripping of
 his entire Palestinian identity. In the following stanza,
 the Zionist is the archeologist digging deep into the soil
 attempting to prove his legitimate claim to the land of
 Palestine.

The archeologist's busy analysing stones.
 He's looking for his eyes in the rubble of
 legends
 to prove I'm a transient on the road/
 lacking eyes and language in civilization's
 book!
 Meanwhile I slowly plant my trees and sing
 about my love.

However since the wound is dynamic, the Zionist is unsuccessful. In the following stanza the poet shouts:

I am dead and newborn in the night of the
crime.
See! See how I cleave to the soil! (IW&FT)

Finally, as Wedde and Ṭuqān write: "The wound has become Palestinethe wound images converge: as Palestine is a wound encompassing the mutilation of culture, subjugation and humiliation, and literal wounds of fighters, so those individual wounds become Palestine."⁹

Samīḥ al-Qāsim brings these wound images together in his poem "The Fall Of The Masks" where he portrays the wounds that Israel inflicts upon Palestinian and Palestine. Israel can no longer hide from the injustices, the wounds perpetrated against the occupied territories and their people and thus Israel has removed its own mask. He writes:

All the masks have fallen
either my flag remains
and my cup
or my corpse
and a hurricane.

In what God will you seek shelter?
Which God will bless your napalm?
and the fragments which tore my flesh?
Who will sell you a writ of absolution?
While your teeth are deep in my arm
You who fear the glow
and begrudge fertility
in the land of the hungry
You, the stooge of colonialism
the agent of skyscrapers
and guardian of petroleum.

In the last lines above, al-Qāsim is speaking of Israel as a link to Western imperialist powers. For the United States, for example, Israel serves as a proxy in the Middle East, Latin America and South Africa. In return, the U.S. supplies Israel with billions of dollars annually. Al-Qāsim develops this sentiment of distrust of Western collusion in occupation when, later in the poem, he addresses the United Nations Security Council, telling the Palestinian story. Here, again, the wounds of the land and the Palestinian are one and the same:

Oh esteemed Security Council
 my story has twenty chapters
 Oh esteemed Security Council
 It became twenty nights
 twenty orange flowers
 decayed in the square
 of our humble village
 twenty orange flowers
 roaming at night
 in the streets of the city
 twenty sad caravans
 departing ashamedly
 with heads below
 to the east---I remember
 to the south and north
 searching for a God
 twenty orange trees
 were butchered there
 without fight.

And I suffer
 from my torment
 while my worn feet
 go from door to door
 and my swollen face
 unaware of spears
 and my children's face
 like an empty plate.

(NA&EG)

The wound images also converge in two short poems from Fadwā Ṭūqān's dīwān where she portrays her beloved Palestine and all that is Arab and Palestinian. To her, the wound represents both tragedy and death.

In "The Flood And The Trees" the June War is presented as an evil cyclone, a black flood attacking "our green, good land" of Palestine. Here, the Palestinian and Arab struggles are intertwined. The Arab nation is portrayed as a tree, which the Western media proclaims "has fallen!". When the poet asks, "Has the tree fallen?" she responds by seeking forgiveness from the heritage of her ancestors:

Forgiveness we beg you
 The red roots drenched with wine
 The limbs discarded
 Arab roots, forgive us
 Roots that penetrate deeply like rocks in
 the bottom of the sea
 And stretch into the depths.

While the poet expresses remorse for the shame, disgrace and humiliation of defeat, she also pays tribute to the Arab nation for its strength and its determination for life. The real answer to the question: "Has the tree fallen?" comes in the poem's last stanza:

The trees are going to arise
 The trees and branches are going to arise
 They are going to grow in the sun and turn
 green
 And put forth leaves, the trees laughing
 In the face of the sun
 And the birds are going to come
 It is inevitable the birds will come
 The birds will come
 The birds will come.

(PH)

The poet leaves no question in the mind of the reader. The Arab nation, the Palestinian people, will live and will bring new life. In the midst of the pain, the bloodshed, the destruction of life---the wounds, Ṭūqān has an undying hope and belief in her people and their will to survive. The birds, symbolic of freedom, will build nests in the trees, symbols of Palestine, and sing new songs.

In the poem entitled "She Is Forever", Ṭūqān expresses the intense love of her people for the land. Through resistance and the spirit of determination, she then expresses how the wound can be healed, or transformed:

Oh my beloved country
 No matter what streams to you in that place
 of injustice
 where there is no way out
 The millgrinders of torture and pain
 Will never be able, oh our beloved
 To gouge out your eyes.
 Never let them kill dreams and hopes
 Never let them crucify the freedom of
 building and working
 Never let them rob the laughter from our
 babies
 Or destroy, or burn.

From our suffering
 From our great sorrow,
 Blood on our walls
 From the trembling of death and life
 Life will resurrect in you anew
 Oh our deep wound
 You torment us
 Our only love. (PH)

The poets, like their countrypeople, gain strength from Palestine and from both those who continue to suffer and have suffered before them. As Denys Johnson-Davies

points out, referring to the poet Darwish: "The spirit of resistance is strengthened by the wounds that Palestine has undergone, just as his love for the woman who is Palestine is nourished for the poet by the deprivation he suffers."¹⁰

Among those who suffer the wounds are those who have chosen armed struggle as a way to free Palestine from occupation. The freedom fighter theme thus becomes an important element of Palestinian resistance poetry.

Notes for Chapter V:

1. Salma al-Khadra' al-Jayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry Vol.2, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), p.812.

2. Said, Question of Palestine, p.133.

3. Raja Shehadeh, Samed: Journal of a West Bank Palestinian, (New York: Adama Books, 1984), pp.34-35.

4. Ibid., p.37.

5. Cobban, The Palestine Liberation Organization, p.168.

6. See A.J. Arberry, The Seven Odes, (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD., 1957), p.61.

7. Ian Wedde and Fawwaz Tuqan, Selected Poems of Mahmoud Darwish, (Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1973), p.88.

8. Ibid., p.9.

9. Ibid., p.9.

10. Johnson-Davies, The Music of Human Flesh, p.xi.

CHAPTER VI: THE FREEDOM FIGHTER THEME

The portrayal of freedom fighters within Palestinian resistance poetry is a concrete example of people becoming active participants in shaping their own destiny. Strengthened by their Palestinian identity, the freedom fighters take the wound of pain and death in order to bring new life in the form of a liberated Palestine. Professor Said writes:

What all Palestinians refer to today as the Palestinian Revolution is not the negative distinction of being unlike others, but a positive feeling of the whole Palestinian experience as a disaster to be remedied, of Palestinian identity as something understandable not only in terms of what we lost, but as something we are forging---a liberation from non-entity, oppression, and exile.¹

The poetry of Maḥmūd Darwīsh is filled with the freedom fighter theme. Having served time in Israeli prisons as well as living under house arrest, the role of the freedom fighter is familiar to him. It is, perhaps, his own willingness to sacrifice for Palestine that has contributed to the popularity of his poetry.

In the poem "I Have Witnessed The Massacre", Darwīsh moves from being the victim of a massacre, imprisoned, living under curfew, to a freedom fighter who chooses to find a way out. He writes:

I have witnessed the massacre
 I am a victim
 I am the son of plain words
 I have seen pebbles flying
 I have seen dew drops as bombs
 When they shut the gates of my heart on me
 Built barricades and imposed a curfew
 My heart turned into an alley
 My ribs into stones
 And carnations grew
 And carnations grew. (IW&FT)

Instead of succumbing to the massacre, to imprisonment and curfew, the poet's heart turns into an alley so that he can escape; his ribs are not broken but become stones which will resist the occupier. Carnations, perhaps a symbol of Palestine and life there, grow. The poet leaves the reader with a sense of hope.

In "Promises From Al-Assifa" the freedom fighters are messengers of hope willing to suffer the wound in order to bring life. Al-Assifa means "the Storm" and refers to Fath. It is the name once used by Fath as a fictitious front-organization.

Be that as it may
 I must reject death
 And stop my sentimental tears
 And rid the olive trees
 Of their barren branches.
 Today I sing with joy
 Behind the lids of frightened eyes.
 The Storm has promised me wine and rainbows
 And has rid the olive trees
 Of lazy sparrows and limp branches.

Be that as it may
 I must be proud of you.
 You are the wound of the city
 And the lights of our sad nights.
 When the streets frown in my face
 You shield me from their hateful looks.
 Today I sing with joy
 Behind the lids of frightened eyes.
 The Storm has blown in my country
 Promising wine and rainbows. (BB)

The freedom fighters, however, are also calling on
 Palestinians to join the resistance, to take responsibility
 for their lives and their homeland. The Storm promises
 wine, symbolic of harvest and life, and rainbows, symbolic
 of hope after the storm. The Storm blows in Palestine, as
 conveyed by the olive trees, and gets rid of lazy sparrows
 and limp branches, symbolizing their call for people to
 take responsibility and join the resistance.

In his poem "I Declare" Darwish explains that the
 depth of the resister's determination flows from his or her
 Arab roots. The poet becomes the warrior who has chosen to
 participate in the struggle for liberation out of his love
 for Palestine and all that is Palestinian:

As long as a hand-span of my land remains
 As long as I have an olive tree---
 A lemon tree---
 A well---and a cactus plant
 As long as I have but a single memory
 A tiny library
 A grandfather's picture---and a wall
 As long as Arabic words are uttered
 And folk songs are sung
 In my land
 Scribes of poetry

Tales of Antar Al-Abse
 Epics of the war against Persia and Rome
 As long as I possess my eyes
 Lips and hands
 My own-self!
 I shall declare in the face of my foe!---
 A fierce struggle of liberation
 In the name of free men everywhere
 Workers---students---and poets
 I shall declare
 And let the cowards---enemies of the sun
 Be satiated of the bread of shame
 As long as I have myself
 As long as myself remain---
 Bread and arms---
 In the hands of freedom fighters! (NA&EG)

The determination of Darwish and other poets of the resistance has had severe consequences for them personally. As Maḥmūd Darwish writes: "You can write what you wish as long as you are willing to pay the price. 'Tis the unwritten law.² Darwish was threatening to the Israeli Government, not only as a Palestinian poet but also as a member of the Communist Party. Yet he was not deterred. Through his poem "Defiance" the reader learns that not only does the poet receive from the freedom fighter but he also gives to the freedom fighter; he tells of the essential role that poetry plays within the struggle for liberation and of his own determination to continue writing as a form of resistance.

You may fasten my chains
 Deprive me of my books and tobacco
 You may fill my mouth with earth
 Poetry will feed my heart, like blood

It is salt to the bread
 And liquid to the eye
 I will write it with nails, eye sockets and
 daggers
 I will recite it in my prison cell---
 In the bathroom---
 In the stable---
 Under the whip---
 Under the chains---
 In spite of my handcuffs
 I have a million nightingales
 On the branches of my heart
 Singing the song of liberation. (NA&EG)

It is from the prison cell, from his own willingness
 to sacrifice in the struggle for a liberated Palestine,
 that Darwish finds his own freedom. He learns that no
 matter what the occupier, his jailer, chooses to do, the
 occupier cannot kill the dream of a free and liberated
 Palestine, nor the determination to resist until that
 becomes a reality. From prison he wrote "Homeland":

My Homeland:
 The chains have taught me
 The fierceness of the eagle
 And the tenderness of the optimist
 I did not know
 That under our skin
 A storm is being born
 And rivers are being wed.
 They dimmed the light in my prison cell
 But a radiant light is beaming in my heart
 They wrote my number on the wall
 And a plain of wheat has grown
 I carved your bloody picture with my teeth
 And wrote a song for the dying night
 I stabbed my defeat in the flesh of dark
 And stitched my fingers in the verse of light
 While the conqueror stands on the roof of my home
 He only conquered my cell
 He only saw my glow
 He only heard my chains

And if I am burnt on the cross of prayers
 I shall become a saint---dressed in a uniform.
 (NA&EG)

And in his poem "The Detention Room Has No Walls", Darwish expresses how his bondage has helped him to understand the "face of my freedom" and his connection to the freedom fighters who have given their lives for Palestine. The first stanza captures this theme:

As usual
 My detention room saved me from death
 And from rust of the intellect and deceptions of
 Worn out ideas.
 On its ceiling I perceived the face of my freedom
 And the orange grove
 And the names of those who lost their names
 yesterday
 On the battlefield. (IW&FT)

Samih al-Qāsim often portrays the freedom fighter theme in his poetry. In his poem "In The Twentieth Century" al-Qāsim explains how the Palestinian revolutionary struggle develops out of the experience of occupation and not from a hatred of Jewish people or Judaism. In the first stanza he writes:

For centuries
 I did not hate
 But now
 I am forced to raise my untiring spear
 In the face of the dragon,
 To draw a sword of fire
 In the face of Baal
 To become Elijah in the twentieth century.

Al-Qāsim, who often uses Old Testament symbolism in his poetry, writes how he symbolically must become Elijah in order to fight Baal. The use of Baal and Elijah refers to a period of time when the Israelites of the Old Testament turned away from God in order to serve Baal, or the God of the Canannites. In 1 Kings 17, God performs a miracle on Mount Carmel which convinces the Israelites to turn away from Baal and follow God and God's prophet Elijah. Elijah then tells the people to seize the prophets of Baal and to take them to the Wadi Kishon where Elijah slaughters them.

In the third stanza of the poem, al-Qasim explains why he must choose armed resistance:

For centuries
 I did not turn visitors
 Away from my door
 Then one morning I opened my eyes
 To find my food stolen
 My wife strangled
 And my child's back a field of wounds
 I recognized my treacherous guests.
 I planted mines and daggers at my door
 And I swore by the traces of the knife
 That none of these guests shall enter my house
 In the twentieth century. (NA&EG)

Like Darwish, al-Qāsim is another resistance poet who served time in jail and under house arrest. In 1961 he was imprisoned and three years later was fired from his teaching job. In 1967 he was first restricted to Haifa and then placed under house arrest. Later he was accused of

collaborating with Fath freedom fighters in the blowing up of the Haifa pipelines and was arrested. According to some reports, he was also tortured by police. Like Darwish, al-Qāsim's experience of detention helped him to understand that imprisonment for a just cause is really liberation. In his poem "End Of A Discussion With A Jailer," al-Qāsim portrays the Israeli occupier as the one who is really imprisoned by the Palestinians, supporters of the poet, who will resist until they are liberated from occupation.

From the windows of my small cell
 I can see the trees smiling at me.
 Roofs filled with my people,
 Windows weeping and praying for me
 From the window of my small cell
 I can see your large cell. (AA)

In his poem "I Defy" al-Qāsim has become the freedom fighter who explains that the only choice he has in the midst of occupation and exploitation is to defy. Like Darwish, it is rooted in his being; his grandfather and father have passed it on to him. The wounds he and his people and his homeland have suffered have taught him to defy. He writes:

Talk about exile---I defy
 silence my argument with chains
 and a foolish prison cell
 I defy.

Turn plague and sadness against me
 I remain defying
 cut my wrist
 with my bloody chest I defy
 cut my leg
 I mount the wound and walk
 and with my violence I defy
 and with my teeth
 and the teeth of songs---I defy.

and kill me---I defy
 I kill death
 and come to you a defying God.

All what I own of my father's and grandfather's
 inheritance is to defy!

All what I understand from the wind
 and the secret of erased villages
 and songs of springs
 on dying grass
 a concealed sob
 the roots of the tree
 memorize it for me
 a sob: To defy.

(HH)

Again, in the poem "Enemy Of The Sun", Samīh al-Qāsim is the freedom fighter who will resist the occupier until there is no life left in him. The Zionist occupier called "enemy of the sun", a name also used by Darwīsh, is perhaps chosen by the poets to mean enemy of light and life. In the first stanza, the poet begins by confessing that, in the midst of economic exploitation by the Israelis, he will continue to resist:

I may---if you wish---lose my livelihood
 I may sell my shirt and bed.
 I may work as a stone cutter,
 A street sweeper, a porter
 I may clean your stores
 Or rummage your garbage for food.

I may lie down hungry,
 O, enemy of the sun,
 But
 I shall not compromise
 And to the last pulse in my veins
 I shall resist.

In the second and third stanzas, the poet recites a litany of the injustices and tragedys the occupiers have committed against the Palestinian people, their history and their culture. He ends his poem, strong, defiant, and steadfast in his will to suffer the wounds and resist in the struggle for liberation:

You may take the last strip of my land,
 Feed my youth to prison cells.
 You may plunder my heritage.
 You may burn my books, my poems
 Or feed my flesh to the dogs
 You may spread a web of terror
 On the roofs of my village,
 O, enemy of the sun,
 But
 I shall not compromise
 And to the last pulse in my veins
 I shall resist.

You may put out the light in my eyes
 You may deprive me of my mother's kisses.
 You may curse my father, my people.
 You may distort my history,
 You may deprive my children of a smile
 And of life's necessities.
 You may fool my friends with a borrowed face.
 You may build walls of hatred around me.
 You may glue my eyes to humiliations,
 O enemy of the sun,
 But
 I shall not compromise
 And to the last pulse in my veins
 I shall resist. (NA&EG)

Fadwā Ṭūqān similarly speaks of the freedom fighters in her poetry. Perhaps this is why former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, after having read a poem by Ṭūqān, commented that the poem was equal to twenty commandos.³ Her poem "The Will Of Songs", is dedicated as "a salute to our sons and daughters, the fighters that have been swallowed up by Israeli prisons." This is a poem that expresses the determination, steadfastness, and depth of resistance of "the fighters". She ends the poem by identifying herself with Fath, Jabha meaning "Front," referring to the PFLP, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Āsifa or "Storm" as cited earlier.

Hell opened its doors
 And swallowed the buds of the soft body
 in its dungeons.
 Yet the song remained there
 on the lips of the young fighters
 red and proud
 penetrating the darkness and the walls:
 -----My brothers
 with my blood I write my will
 guard my revolution
 with your blood
 with my advancing nation
 I am Fatah, I am Jabha, I am Asifa. (HH)

This determination to remain steadfast in their resistance may be what is the most threatening to the Israeli Government. No matter what the occupier chooses to do to the Palesinian, he or she cannot be controlled. Even

when they are killed, their spirit lives on in the people. And, the poets often write poems in their honor.

In 1973, the Israeli Government targeted several people within the PLO leadership for assassination. Most notable were the car-bomb deaths of the famous Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani (and as mentioned earlier, the author of the critical study of Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-66), who was a spokesperson for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and his young niece Lamis. At this time the Israeli commandos also murdered three men in their homes in Beirut: Kamāl Naser, a Palestinian poet and journalist, spokesperson for the PLO and one of the first persons to be deported from the West Bank, Mūhammed Yūssef al-Najjar, the PLO's Foreign Minister, and Kamāl 'Adwan.

Fadwā Ṭūqān chose to commemorate the lives of these three freedom fighters in her poem "Gone Are Those We Love." Published one month after they were murdered, Tuqan brings together the Palestinian identity theme and attachment to the land with the wounds the freedom fighters, symbolized by eagles, have suffered. Throughout the poem she repeats the lines "gone are those we love" (including the title), one for each Palestinian freedom fighter. Her last lines serve as a reminder to the reader

that although the "eagles" are gone, the vision and love and steadfastness that they leave behind can never be taken away. In this sense, they can never be killed.

One eagle after another
 vanished into darkness
 One by one they were
 slain
 for having towered above the clouds
 Motherland
 for your sake
 their blood was spilled
 like rosary beads of rubies slip.
 Gone are those we love.

Palestine
 in the seasons of your irremediable mourning
 you drank cups of absinthe we drank
 your thirst was unquenched
 ours eternal.
 Waterless we shall remain
 here at the mouth of this fountain
 till the day of their return
 with the oceans of dawn that they embraced:
 A vision that knows no death
 A love that has no end.

(KB)

Fadwā Ṭūqān, like Darwīsh and al-Qāsim, not only writes about the freedom fighters but becomes the freedom fighter herself. In her poem entitled "Freedom Of The People", she begins her "war song" this way:

My freedom! My freedom! My freedom!
 A sound I repeat
 Screaming in a loud voice
 Under the bullets and in the flame
 I run after it
 In spite of chains
 I follow behind it
 And I run in spite of the night
 I follow its steps

I continue, carrying all of my rage
 While I struggle, calling for
 My freedom! My freedom! My freedom!

In the second stanza the warrior and her homeland join together in the struggle for "freedom":

And the brave and holy river repeats
 My freedom!
 And the two banks echo:
 My freedom!
 And the raging wind
 And the thunder and tornadoes and rain in my
 homeland
 Repeat it with me:
 My freedom! My freedom! My freedom!

In the last stanza Ṭūqān conveys how far she will go in order to continue resisting. She too is willing to suffer prison and torture in the fight for freedom. Ultimately she knows that the wounds she suffers, the Palestinians suffer, and that Palestine suffers will one day be transformed into new life; freedom for her land and her people.

I will continue carving its name
 And while I'm struggling
 On the land and on the walls,
 In the doors, in the houses of the east side
 In the temple of the virgin, the prayer niche,
 in the roads to the fields
 In the highlands and lowlands and bends and
 streets
 In prison, in the torture chambers, on the
 gallows,
 In spite of chains, in spite of the demolition of
 houses, in spite of the flame of fires,
 I will continue carving its name until I see it
 Extending in my country and growing
 And continuing to grow
 And continuing to grow

Until it covers every inch of the soil
Until I see red freedom open every door
And the night flees
And the lights press down the columns of fog
My freedom! My freedom!
And the brave and holy river repeats:
My freedom!
And the two banks echo:
My freedom!
And the raging wind
And the thunder and tornadoes and rain in my
homeland
Repeat it with me:
My freedom---my freedom---my freedom
(PH)

Notes for Chapter VI:

- 1.Said, The Question of Palestine, p.135.
- 2.Aruri and Ghareeb, Enemy Of The Sun, p.xlv.
- 3.Ibid., p.xlvi.

CHAPTER VII: WOMAN'S PLACE

The three themes of Palestinian resistance poetry presented thus far: the identity theme, the wound theme, and the freedom fighter theme, have examined the relationship between Palestinian culture and history, and the liberation struggle. Since this struggle is waged in order to remove all forms of oppression and exploitation in search of total liberation, then woman's place within Palestinian society and within the liberation struggle must also be examined.

Woman's place in literature examines the roles, depictions and characterizations of woman both textually and contextually. For example, in the last chapter, Fadwā Tūqān's poem "Freedom Of The People" moves beyond a unidimensional depiction of woman as mother and wife to portray woman (herself) as freedom fighter. How common a portrait of woman is this, both in Palestinian resistance poetry and within Palestinian society under occupation?

In many of the poems of Mahmūd Darwīsh, woman is idealized. As was cited earlier, Darwīsh portrays woman as his beloved Palestine in a relationship that is never fulfilled. Palestine is the wife/lover and mother. Her place in society is dependent upon her relationship to man. As wife/lover she waits for and supports her man. In the poem "A Song For Men," Darwīsh writes:

We shall change the quarry
 into an observation post
 overlooking the deepest
 and the farthest scenes.
 We shall only view the dawn
 and hear of triumph.
 Every insurrection will move us
 And every maiden will kiss us
 And every garden will feed us
 We shall dance to every verse
 and assist every orphan. (NA&EG)

Here woman does not join man in the song where men become shapers of their own history. Instead, she is the maiden who seems to participate in a subservient role, everpresent to serve the freedom fighters.

Over and over again in his poetry, Darwish presents woman as the fertile mother. Palestine, as the beloved mother, plays the role of giving birth to new freedom fighters who will carry on the struggle. In his poem "Wishes" he writes:

Our land, my friend,
 Isn't barren!
 Each land gives birth in due time
 And at dawn new fighters are born. (BB)

This idealization of woman not only serves to perpetuate women's oppression, but it also, by omission, is an incomplete portrayal of the Palestinian woman. As Lillian S. Robinson writes in her essay "Dwelling In Decencies: Radical Criticism And The Feminist Perspective": "In literature, to idealize means to ignore, perhaps to 'transcend,' reality."¹

Much of Samiḥ al-Qāsim's poetry does not portray women specifically. There are, however, references to the fertility of the land and the victimization of women. In his poem "The Children of Rafah," al-Qāsim writes of the children of a village in the Gaza Strip. In the first part of the poem there are two fleeting references to woman as victim. The poet expresses sadness at the victimization of woman by the Israeli occupiers. However the sadness turns the male children, instead of all the children, into fighters. He writes:

To him who digs his path
 in the wounds of millions
 whose tanks crush the garden's roses
 To him who breaks at night the houses' windows
 who burns a field and a museum
 and sings to the fire
 who rips the hair of sad women
 and bombs grape fields
 who executes the nightingale of feasts in the
 square
 who breaks rainbows
 The children of deep rooted ancestors tonight
 declare:
 We did not knit blankets from hair braids
 we did not spit on the face of murdered women
 after plucking the golden teeth
 Why do you take the candy
 and give us bombs?
 why make Arab children orphans?
 And thanks?

Sadness turned us into men
 we must fight

Later in the poem, al-Qāsim again portrays woman as victim of the occupation, unable or unwilling to change her destiny. Or, woman who has placed all of her hope in her

religion without participating in active resistance.

Oh wife of the man with unknown residence
 What are you waiting for?
 the joys of returning home on the safety bus
 are lost---what are you waiting for?
 lost---with all religions!

In the next stanza, however, the poet portrays a woman who has been transformed from a unidimensional character into a self-motivated person who chooses to return to her homeland. The reader is unsure of the actions of this woman, but learns that she ends up dead on a "bloody stretcher". One presumes it is from acts of resistance as the poet calls her "Hana the brave".

An hour passed
 and another hour
 and an hour,
 before She returned
 on a bloody stretcher
 Hana the brave (HH)

Before examining the portrayal of woman's place in the poetry of Fadwā Tūqān, it would be helpful to look at the contextual, that is, what is woman's place within Palestinian society under occupation?

Prior to the June War of 1967, women's participation in the struggle of the Palestinians for a homeland included what many might consider traditional activities such as: organizing Palestinian women's societies, coordinating charitable work, collecting funds and distributing them to people in need, delivering food, water and weapons to men fighting in the struggle, and giving first aid to those

wounded. However, women also took part in protests and demonstrations. After 1948 when the agrarian population had lost their land and were forced into entering wage labor, women too entered this process of proletarianization. Most of the jobs, however, were menial. Although women began to have freedom of movement once they entered waged employment, they did not necessarily find they had other freedoms such as the freedom to make their own decisions.

In 1965, the Union of Palestinian Women was organized. According to Mai Sayeh, an official of the Union of Palestinian Women, its role is:

to bring together Palestinian women wherever they are and it attempts to establish branches in every district in both the Occupied Territories and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The Union tries to help women to solve the problems posed by the education of children. It has a social role and organized child-rearing and sewing courses and political education courses. Except in the Occupied Territories women learn how to use weapons and, as far as possible, play a military and political role.²

Since the June 1967 War, women continue to participate in demonstrations and public meetings and in the preservation of the economic and social infrastructure. This latter role includes developing literacy programs, vocational training for men and women, education, and committees to preserve Palestinian heritage and culture. Rita Giacaman, a community health worker and teacher at Bir

Zeit University on the West Bank, explains the importance of these women's societies within the context of Palestinian occupation:

The women's charitable societies have played a significant role in the development of a Palestinian women's movement. They brought women out of their homes and perhaps, for the first time, into the realm of social and political life. In so doing, they laid a foundation for the creation of a far more radical women's movement than the occupied territories have so far witnessed---a movement that relies on radical solutions for development, women's problems, and the national problem.³

Women's groups actively working for change and creatively finding ways to deal with their situation have been threatening to the Israeli Government. Many women in the occupied territories have been arrested, detained and sent to prison for all kinds of activities from collecting herbs and laying flowers on the graves of martyrs, to participating in demonstrations, writing for newspapers, membership in organizations, and involvement in armed struggle. Women's Work Committees in the occupied territories, a network of women interested in helping other Palestinian women become self-sufficient, run kindergartens, day care centers, self-help projects and other workshops. They have frequently been broken into by Israeli forces or Jewish settlers who confiscate hand-crafted items, literature, and vandalize the centers. The

organizers and teachers are often arrested without charges and jailed for months.

As prisoners in Israeli jails and prisons, women, like men, are subject to interrogation, and physical and psychological abuse, including torture. Rosemary Sayigh writes of her encounters with Palestinian women who have been interrogated:

The inevitability of interrogation is taken for granted by all the women I meet; indeed it has become an initiation rite marking their graduation to an (adult) national role, the abandonment of the (child/women) domestic one. R.F tells me unemotionally of her two weeks in the Moscobiya, when they tried to force her to sign a "confession" that she belonged to the PLO. Apart from interrupted sleep and continuous discomfort interrogation was accompanied by forced stripping, name calling ("prostitute"), and threats of rape.⁴

Adults are not the only ones arrested, detained and imprisoned. School children are also subject to short and long term detention. Rosemary Sayigh points out that: "It is no longer rare for schoolgirls to be arrested or harassed in class by occupying forces who break in, using tear-gas bombs and a rich assortment of riot-control equipment. The effect is repercussive: teachers in Jerusalem comment on the ever-earlier politicization of girls."⁵

Especially since 1967 and women's increasing mobilization, the reproductive role of women has put them in a position of often having to choose between direct

participation in the struggle for a Palestinian homeland and that of bringing new life into the world. Hamida Kazi explains that from 1967-1982,

women began to wrestle with the not unique dilemma of reconciling participation in the national struggle and their reproductive role while the continued existence of three and a half million Palestinians dispersed all over the world is under threat, as is the survival of Palestinian culture.⁶

Fadwā Ṭūqān does portray woman's place within Palestinian society as wife and mother. However she goes beyond this limited depiction, presenting a more realistic view of the Palestinian woman.

In her poem entitled "Hamza", she expresses the love of a fallāh for his land and his home, and the suffering inflicted upon him by the Israeli military who demolishes his home and takes his son away for suspected resistance activity. Ṭūqān describes Hamza's portrayal of the land of Palestine as a fertile woman:

Hamza

Like others in my hometown
the salt of the earth
who toil with their hands for their bread
Hamza was
a simple man.

When we met that day
this land had been a harvest of flames
in a windless bush it had sunk
in a cloak of barren grief. I had been
swept by the daze of defeat.
Hamza said,

"This land, my sister, has a fertile heart
 it throbs, doesn't wither, endures
 for the secret of hills and wombs
 is one
 this earth that sprouts with spikes and palms
 is the same that gives birth to a warrior,
 This land, my sister, is a woman,"
 he said. (KB)

And again, in her poem "Labor Pains," Ṭūqān equates a mother's pain and joy of childbirth with the pain and joy of new seeds taking root in the land:

The wind carries the seed
 And our land shakes it in the night
 Tremor of the labor pains
 And the executioner himself is content
 With tales of impotence
 With tales of rubble
 And shattered things

Oh youthful tomorrow
 Advise the executioner
 How the tremor of childbirth could be
 Tell him how the wild desert plant is born
 From the pain of the land
 And how the morning is awakened
 From the rose of blood
 In the wounds. (PH)

In her poem "The Fidā'i And The Land, From The Diary Of Mazn," Ṭūqān presents the relationship between a mother and her son, a freedom fighter. She expresses the pain and joy of a mother who must say good bye to her son who is giving his life for his homeland. In the following stanzas, Mazn addresses his mother, explaining why he must become a freedom fighter. He tells his mother he is offering his life for his homeland which is the only thing

dearer to him, in life, than his mother. But he assures her that there must be sacrifice and the spilling of blood for joy (in the form of a victory) to come. It is a price the freedom fighter is willing to pay. He says:

---: I'm going mother
 I'm going with the comrades
 For the destined time
 Content with my destiny.
 I carry it like a rock, tight to my neck.
 And from here I'm rushing
 And everything that I have
 All the throbbing
 And love and affection and adoration
 I offer it for her sake, to the land
 A dowery, and no one dearer than you
 My mother, except the land.

---: Don't be sad if I fall before---
 Its time of arrival.
 Our road is long and full of suffering
 And before the arrival time extends along the
 expanse
 Of the shores of the infernal night
 We cross it on the torches of blood
 Because joy comes after us
 If is inevitable that joy comes
 So that the taking and the giving become equal.

Ṭūqān then tells the reader the response of Mazn's mother. She allows him to go for he is her sacrifice to the homeland. She reflects back upon the birth of her child and the wound/pain of labor which brought joy in the form of the child. One senses that Mazn developed his love for the land and his willingness to give his life for a free homeland from his mother. In the following stanzas, the narrator and mother speak:

---: Oh, my son
Go!

And his mother guards him with a sura of the
Qur'an.

Go!

And protects him with the name of Allah and the
Qur'an.

In a tent of the night
And in the vastness of the barren country
She got up to pray.
She raised her face to the heavens
And the sky was
Overflowing with stars and the mysteries.

Oh day she delivered him to life
Small, fragrant, soft piece of dough
From all that fragrance which comes from our land
Oh day she gave him her fertile breast
And embraced her ecstasy
And she discovered the meaning of her existence
In the flow of milk.

Oh my son
Oh my heart.
Because of that day
On that day I gave birth
On that day I gave you
Blood and all the pulse
And all that a motherhood was able to give
Oh my son, oh my valuable plant
That was uprooted from its noble land.
Go, no one is dearer than you
My little son, except the land.

(PH)

Fadwā Tūqān also portrays woman's place in a poem
entitled "From Hiba's Diary". The role of woman in this
poem is that of a Palestinian schoolgirl freedom fighter
who is imprisoned in an Israeli prison, and that of her

mother. Hiba means "gift" in Arabic and perhaps the poet is referring to the schoolgirl who serves as a gift from her mother to the homeland, as in the previous poem. The poem presents the relationship between mother and daughter, the depth of love which radiates between them, and the loneliness caused by the imprisonment of the Palestinian schoolgirl freedom fighter.

My mother's phantom hovers here
 her forehead shines in my eyes
 like the light of stars.
 She might be thinking of me now,
 dreaming

(Before my arrest
 I drew letters on a book
 new and old
 I painted roses
 reared with blood
 and my mother was near me
 blessing my painting.)

I see her
 on her face silence and loneliness
 My book case there on the book shelf
 and my school uniform
 on the hanger
 I see her hand extending
 removing the dust from it
 I follow my mother's steps
 and listen to her thoughts
 yearn to her hug and the face of day.
 (HH)

Ṭūqān also portrays: woman as resister who is tortured in Israeli prisons, and, the friendship and solidarity between women involved in the struggle. In her poem "To Her Sister And Companion In Acts of Resistance", one woman

resister asks forgiveness of another because she has admitted something she did not want to admit during her interrogation. She feels shame and remorse for "surrendering" because "one beast among them" threatened to (the reader must guess) rape her.

---I said it, as the beast wanted,
 in the savagery of the investigation
 forgive me Oh sister, beloved
 I said "Yes" not because I could not bear
 the harsh pain
 not because one of the barbarians
 kept hammering my bloody head to the wall
 inventing torture, throwing me like a morsel
 in the jaws of weakness.
 If this was all, I would have endured
 with the patience of my stubborn pride
 and the strength of faith and belief.
 But one beast among them wanted to---
 Sister forgive me for I still tremble
 when I remember what I cannot say.
 But ten years of my life
 will be chewed by bars
 controlled by the jailer.
 I pay the atonement
 for the moment of my surrender. (KB)

The pain and remorse expressed in this poem is put into context by Laila al-Hamdani, a Palestinian socialist, who was arrested and served three years in Israeli prisons for having been a political activist while she was studying at Bir-Zeit University. Al-Hamdani writes:

Under the Israeli legal system in the Occupied Territories, we are all guilty until proven innocent and your innocence very much depends on the political situation at the time and the mood and personalities of the interrogators. For

them, each case is a professional challenge to their training and their ego, so many of them are prepared to do anything, no matter how inhuman, to get a confession from a prisoner. How many prisoners have 'confessed' to acts they have never committed, just to stop the torture, while others ended up crippled for life, some even died, rather than confess?⁷

Woman's place in Palestinian resistance poetry, as represented by Darwish, al-Qāsim, and Tūqān, is at once: the idealized lover and fertile mother who gives birth to the freedom fighter ready to sacrifice his life for Palestine, and, the steadfast woman resister who is a multi-faceted, self-motivated person actively taking part in the national struggle. These portrayals of woman's place in Palestinian society under occupation are yet to be whole. What is missing is the presentation of the struggle for equal rights among the sexes. Perhaps this is because the women's struggle is even more difficult than the national struggle, for, as African Gwendolyn Konie explains about the struggle for equality in Africa, "it is a struggle between husband and wife, brother and sister, father and mother."⁸

Notes for Chapter VII:

1. Cheryl L. Brown and Karen Olson, (ed.), Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry and Prose, Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1978), pp.25-26.

2. Mai Sayeh, "Choosing Revolution," in Women of the Mediterranean, ed. by Monique Gadant (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1984), p.86.

3. Rita Giacaman, "Development a Key Problem for Palestinian Women in the Israeli-Occupied West Bank," Listen Real Loud, 16, No.2 (1987), p.6.

4. Rosemary Sayigh, "Encounters With Palestinian Women Under Occupation", in Women and the Family in the Middle East, ed. by Elizabeth Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p.193.

5. Ibid., p.193.

6. Hamida Kazi, "Palestinian Women and the National Liberation Movement: A Social Perspective," in Women in the Middle East, ed. Elizabeth Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p.29.

7. Laila al-Hamdani, "A Palestinian Woman in Prison", in Ibid., p.45.

8. Carole Boyce Davies, "Feminist Consciousness And African Literary Criticism", in Ngambika: Studies Of Women In African Literature, ed. by Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1986), p.8.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Poetry has been a part of the lives of the Arab people throughout their history. In pre-Islamic Arabia its role was vital to the tribes. The poet was the spokesperson who portrayed the identity of the tribe; who defended its honor and virtue; who told the story of the tribe. As an art form as well as a symbol of Arab identity, it continues to play a fundamental role in their lives.

As Arab people then, the Palestinians have a rich, historical, poetic tradition from the early pre-Islamic days through today. Palestinian resistance poetry, written in classical Arabic, is distinctly Palestinian within a pan-Arab context.

Within the budding tradition of third world resistance literature, Palestinian resistance poetry is an example of a fighting literature. The poet who writes Palestinian resistance poetry is the writer who has entered Frantz Fanon's "fighting phase". The poet, as writer, has begun to fight with the people. Aware of the Palestinian national culture and history, the poet brings a literature to the struggle for liberation that both serves the people and awakens and arouses them. In the words of Fanon, Palestinian resistance poetry is both a "revolutionary literature and a national literature". It is a fighting

literature that portrays the history and culture of the Palestinian people as they participate in shaping their own destiny.

Following the June War of 1967, the Israeli military tripled the land area under the control of Israel. For a second time Israel became the occupier of an indigenous Arab Palestinian population. The affect upon the Palestinian people was great. The occupation impacted their economic, social, political, educational, and religious life. The Palestinians, in fact, felt their identity threatened with extinction, as the occupiers sought to deny them a history and culture. The wounds they suffered from the occupation were deep, impacting their personal and communal lives.

The Palestinian poetry following the June 1967 War tells the story of the Palestinian people suffering from the disaster, but refusing to give in to it as well. The Palestinian poets, represented in this study by Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Fadwā Tūqān, and Samīh al-Qāsim, portray the story through the presentation of four themes: the identity theme, the wound theme, the freedom fighter theme, and woman's place.

The identity theme lifts up the Arab roots of the Palestinians and speaks of their rich culture and history.

It tells of the intimate connection between Palestinian and the land of Palestine. It portrays a people proud of their heritage and sure of themselves and their community, so much so that they are willing to withstand the sacrifices required for the preservation of their identity.

The wound theme describes the pain suffered by the people and their land under occupation. The wound is sadness, pain, humiliation, betrayal, defeat, and death. It represents the entire stripping of the Palestinian identity. It is, however, suffered for a reason. The wound transforms the lives of the Palestinians. It gives them the strength and determination and hope they need to continue resisting occupation and all it represents.

Among those who suffer the wounds are the freedom fighters who have chosen armed struggle to free Palestine from occupation. The freedom fighter theme is the concrete example of steadfastness and resistance; it is a portrayal of people becoming active participants in shaping their own history. The freedom fighters choose the wound, which often represents death, in order to bring new life to their homeland and their people. Theirs is a love sacrifice offered up for the Palestinian people and Palestine.

The struggle for a liberated Palestine is waged in order to free the people from all forms of oppression and exploitation. The socio-economic, historical realities of

the lives of Palestinian women living under occupation necessitates an examination of woman's place within Palestinian resistance poetry. The roles, depictions, and characterizations of women, both textually and contextually, portray the Palestinian woman as both an idealized, one dimensional character and a more realistic multi-dimensional character. Idealized, woman's place is portrayed as the beloved Palestine in a relationship that is never fully realized. She is wife/lover who waits for and supports her man. She is also the fertile mother who gives birth to new freedom fighters who will continue waging the fight for a free homeland. These portrayals are incomplete because the Palestinian woman is not only wife and mother. She is also a worker (though often as a menial waged laborer) and an active organizer and participant in the resistance movement. She has even suffered the wounds of prisons, interrogations and torture. Some Palestinian poetry, in this study that of Fadwā Tūqān, portrays woman's place in this more realistic representation.

Palestinian resistance poetry, following the June War of 1967, presents the relationship between the national culture and history of the Palestinian people in their quest for liberation. It is an essential element necessary for the survival of the Palestinian people. In the tapestry that is Palestine, it is the thread which

the Palestinians use to weave the story of their survival and contribution to the world. For, in the words of Amilcar Cabral, "The liberation struggle is, above all, a struggle as much for the conservation and survival of the cultural values of the people as for the harmonizing and development of these values within a national framework."¹

Notes for Chapter VIII:

1. Cabral, Unity and Struggle, p.147.

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