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Cities of Struggle and Resistance: the Image of the Palestinian City in Modern Arabic Poetry

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Abstract

This paper aesthetically articulates the representation of the Palestinian city in modern Arabic poetry in order to argue that while Arab -and non-Arab poets-incorporate variety of attitudes toward the city , the presentation of the Palestinian city reveals a radical difference from the rest of Arabic and non-Arabic poetry due to the peculiar history of struggle, resistance and victimization characterizing life in the Palestinian metropolis. To the Palestinian poets, in particular, the city is part of a homeland they have lost or a refugee camp that has been resisting the invaders for decades. Contrary to western cities inhabited by alien residents such as Eliot's Prufrock, or Arab cities populated by strangers, outsiders, whores, outcasts and political prisoners as in the literary cities of Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab and Ahmed Abdul-Muti Hejazi , the Palestinian city is inhabited by heroes and martyrs. These heroes who appear in contemporary Palestinian poetry and take different shapes personify the struggle and resistance of a nation that has frequently refused to surrender at times of crisis. Representing the spirit of the Palestinian people confronting a world replete with treachery and hypocrisy, the Palestinian city and its nameless heroes , in contemporary Arabic poetry, is an embodiment of an eternal and unlimited Palestinian dream , the dream of return, rebirth and liberation. In this context, the paper affirms that unlike Arab cities which are associated with decadence, corruption, exploitation and moral bankruptcy, the Palestinian city, due to the Palestinian history of exile, resistance, victimization and pain, is viewed in Arabic/Palestinian poetry as a location of heroism, struggle, defiance and martyrdom.

[**Keywords:** city, Arabic poetry, Palestine, Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab and Ahmed Abdul-Muti Hejazi, Arabic, martyrdom]

Introduction

The City Narrative in Western and Arabic Literature

The city motif has been approached from different perspectives by writers and poets from different cultures. For example, John Johnston, in his book *The Poet and the City: a Study in Urban Perspectives*, argues that most of the city poetry is attributed to Eliot's poem "The Waste Land":

The Waste Land raised the level of poetic sophistication; it focused attention on the city as an especially revealing cultural phenomenon; it demonstrated that poetry could deal significantly with the evils of urban life; and perhaps most important, it created for the artistic imagination a disquieting "glimpse of chaos" and a consciousness of the possibilities of catastrophic failure in modern civilization. If city poetry today is generally more sensitive and more serious than

it was in 1923, that fact can perhaps be attributed to the unusual demands The Waste Land made upon its readers. (Johnston 1984: 182)

Furthermore, G.M. Hyde, in "The Poetry of the City", points out that "The Waste Land" is a modernist poem representing the twentieth-century consciousness and the spirit of the modern city. Hyde argues that the poetry of the city was born with Baudelaire—"especially with his discovery that crowds mean loneliness and that the terms "multitude" and "solitude" are interchangeable for a poet with an active imagination" (Hyde 1976: 337). Unlike Whitman who poeticized New York in his city poetry Eliot condemns London in "The Waste Land". In Eliot's poem the city of London is not only an "urban agglomeration" with streets and structures but metaphorically a lifeless desert "where the sun beats/And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief/And the dry stone no sound of water".

Eliot does not permit his symbolic desert landscape to diminish the reader's sense of the real city. In coping with the demands of the twentieth century city, Eliot evokes the features of post-war London with its people, streets, bridges, churches, pubs, hotels, taxis, and trams. But the city is not merely the sum of these details. It is both "real" as a place and as Eliot intimates twice "unreal" in that it imprints upon human consciousness as a dream or a vision of reality: "unreal city / under the brown fog of a winter dawn". The preceding lines recall Baudelaire's city haunted by ghosts, and the lines are followed by references to people who turn into automatons in the big city – the unanimated crowd which flows over London Bridge "so many", "I had not thought death had undone so many", says the central persona in *The Waste Land* (Eliot 1973: 236).

In Eliot's city, there is a river, the Thames, which is a major topographical feature of the land on which the city is built. The Thames is used in the poem - *The Waste Land* - to signify the destructive influence of trade, commerce and industry on nature and environment. In addition to ecological pollution and the ships that get rid of its waste and tar in the river, the Thames is associated with other repulsive aspects of the industrial city: the rat-infested river bank, the "low damp ground" where lovers copulate during the weekends, the "dull canal" and the gashouse. Unlike Whitman who calls the city "a female singer", and who never refers to the names of streets, places or structures in Manhattan, except of course Broadway, Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a poem of streets and places : Moorgate, Lower Thames Street, Queen Victoria Street, The Strand, Cannon Street, King William Street, historical churches – such as St. Magnus Martyr– are mentioned, London Bridge is mentioned twice and Cannon Street Hotel is linked with the Metropolis, in Brighton, "as an establishment catering to commercial travelers" (Johnston 1984 : 172).

In a related context, the city, in Arabic literature, has been approached from different critical perspectives seeking to explore social, political, existential, philosophical and ideological aspects which characterize the city in Arabic traditions and literary canons. Historically, the city motif has been frequently used by contemporary Arab poets because they associate modern Arab cities with misery, poverty, economic exploitation, social injustice and political intrigue. Besides, the city/country theme is a major motif that pervades twentieth century Arabic poetry and is pursued by Arab poets such as Gubran,

Ilyas Abu Shabaka, Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi, Mohamed Mahdi al-Jawahiri and Nazik al-Mala'ika - during her Romantic phase in the 1940's. All these poets and others have revealed the differences between the city and the village emphasizing their hostile attitudes toward the city and longing for a utopian / Arcadian world in the arms of nature.

It is significant to argue that the sympathetic attitude of the early twentieth-century Arab poets towards the village and its peasants/inhabitants constituted a revolutionary step forward from the works of earlier writers such as Al-Jabarti and Said al-Bustani who criticized the country life. Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi was one of the first Arab poets who dealt with the inhuman conditions of the peasants community in the Egyptian countryside revealing sympathy towards the Egyptian farmers.ⁱⁱⁱ In the post WWII poetry, major Arab poets such as Badr Shaker al-Sayyab, Abdul Wahhab al-Bayati (from Iraq), Ahmad Abdul-Muti Hejazi, Salah Abdul-Sabur (from Egypt), Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said) and Nizar Qabbani (from Syria) wrote poems exploring the city versus village dialectics.

While Arab poets incorporate a variety of attitudes toward the city, the representation of the city motifs in Palestinian literature reveals "a radical difference from the rest of Arabic poetry" (Jayyusi 1992:35) due to the peculiar history of struggle, resistance and victimization characterizing life in the Palestinian territories. In addition to Jayyusi's view, it is also obvious that unlike the Arab metropolis, Palestinian cities such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Acre, Gaza, Nablus, Galilee and others have been treated by Arab / Palestinian poets in a totally different way since the Palestinian tragedy in 1948. To the Palestinian poets, the city is associated with the land. In other words, the Palestinian city is part of a lost homeland or a refugee camp that has been resisting the invaders for decades. As part of the Palestinian territory, the city is of ultimate value to the Palestinian people, particularly to the Palestinian poets who stay in exile longing for return to their roots. The longing for a place, a city, is eternal in Palestinian poetry and it can never be diminished because it has acquired the quality of an absolute. To the Palestinian poets, the city, the land, the village and the homeland are all integral parts of their lost and ever-sought after dream.

Contrary to other Arab cities, the Palestinian metropolis does not represent a menace to its people. Instead, the Palestinian city is defended by its people inside the occupied territory and is longed for by those who are forced to stay in Diaspora. Apparently, the Palestinian city occupied a significant position in modern Arabic poetry because it has been subjected to the violence, brutality and state terrorism of the invaders. It has been a target for the colonizers' hatred and malice for ages, yet, it has been able to resist all attempts to eradicate its Arab identity. The Palestinian city is both a place of victimization and a locale of sacrifice, resistance and noble heroism. Unlike western cities which are occupied by alien residents such as Eliot's Prufrock, or Arab cities populated by strangers, outsiders, whores, pimps, outcasts and exiles as in the cities of Badr Shaker al-Sayyab and Ahmed Abdul-Muti Hejazi, the Palestinian city is inhabited by heroes and martyrs. These heroes, who appear in contemporary Palestinian poetry and take different shapes, personify the anger and resistance of a nation that has

frequently refused to surrender at a time of crisis in a world dominated by internal treachery, hypocrisy and external hegemony.

The Palestinian city heroes, mentioned above, frequently appear in the poetry of Palestinian poets such as Samih al-Qasim, Mureed al-Barghouthi, Mahmoud Darwish and others. One of these heroes is al-Qasim's Fatima, the eight-year-old girl, from Rafah city-Gaza strip - who insists on helping a wounded Palestinian soldier regardless of the dangerous consequences of her mission. The stories of these victims/heroes pervade Mureed al-Barghouthi's poetry such as the story of Mohamed Al-Dura-one of the well-known heroes in modern Palestinian history is Mohamed Al-Dura, the Palestinian child, killed, in a cold-blooded manner by an Israeli tank in Gaza. In "A Night that Has no Equal", al-Barghouthi creates an image of Mohamed Al-Dura- the famous Palestinian child who was brutally killed during the First Intifada by an Israeli tank and the murder scene was televised by a reporter's camera and it was broadcast to the whole world. The poem depicts Al-Dura, the Intifada martyr visualizing him as if he were coming back at night to visit his family:

He stepped into his room
 his picture is still there near the small bed
 He knocks the doors of all the rooms in the house to awaken his family
 he wants to ask them about their life under the heavy shelling
 and they want to ask him about his whereabouts after his death.^{iv}

Then the language of the poem becomes more emotional and touching as it explores the unfulfilled wishes and chattered dreams of the child and his poor family:

He wishes he could ask all of them about their life under the night shelling
 They wish they could, ask him if he has already taken his dinner
 If he has ever suffered from the cold of the night as he lies in his tomb
 and whether the dust covering his dead body
 is sufficient enough to protect him from the cold of the grave
 they wish they could also ask him if the doctors have succeeded in removing the
 bullet of fear from his heart
 and whether he is still frightened or not"

(cited in Abdul-Aziz 2004: 5).

Apparently, the fictional dialogue between Al-Dura and his family is highly revealing because it captures the horrible moments prior to his death as it appears in television news bulletins when he was trembling out of fear, under the shelling of the Israeli tanks and machine guns, attempting to protect himself by hiding behind the back of his father. Al-Barghouthi skillfully visualizes the visit of Al-Dura to his family using words that reveal the profound sadness of the miserable family and the inability of the parents to believe that their little son is dead. The poet, however, affirms the death of Al-Dura by referring to the talk of the neighbors who whisper that the story about the return of Mohamed Al-Dura is just a fantasy because he has already left behind him a testimony of his death: "His school bag and his notebooks". The poem emphasizes the death of Al-Dura by emphasizing that his bed is still empty and by referring to his school bag which is

full of bullets' holes. The holes in the bag constitute a witness of the brutality of the enemy whose bullets penetrated both the thin body of the child and his schoolbag. The child's bag, pierced by the bullets is not the only evidence of his death but the colors of his notebooks have also faded away. Moreover, his mother is still in the company of the mourners and those who come to express their condolences after his death. Finally, Al-Barghouthi, in a subtle manner, ends the controversy over the death of Al-Dura and the doubts about the reality of his night visit to his family: "Then, how can a martyr return to his house/ walking on his feet under the heavy shelling of the night?"

The resistance activity of the Palestinian children in Palestinian cities is depicted as an embodiment of the suffering and agony of a nation fighting to save its dignity and the remains of a shattered homeland. al-Barghouthi's poetry that chronicles Palestinian struggle constitutes part of the attempt to resist "the culture of tyranny" advocated by the colonizers and the culture of submission and hypocrisy adopted by Arab governments. In an interview with Afif Ismail, al-barghouthi points out that "in all ages along history, there have been two cultures: the culture of tyranny and the culture of freedom. Today, humanity is in dire need of free intellectuals who should establish a unified front, a counter culture, that is able to confront the Pentagon culture with its oppression, injustice, racism, scorn of international law, and its adoption of the radical and hegemonic ideologies of both Zionists and new conservatives, those who want to build an American empire at the expense of humanity (Cited in Ismail 2003: 5).

There is also a multiplicity of poems by other Palestinian poets dealing with heroism and sacrifice. One of the most famous personae is Darwish's nameless hero who appears in different poems - challenging the Zionist forces - such as "Identity Card" and "The Poem of the Land". Obviously, the sacrificing hero, in Darwish's poetry, frequently delineated as a noble victim, has the capacity to liberate the Palestinian collective consciousness from fear and agony. In "The Poem of the Land", Darwish's nameless hero challenges the enemy to stay forever in the Palestinian city:

O, you who go to the wheat seed
 In its cradle, plow my body
 O you who go to the Mountain of Fire [city of Nablus] , pass over my body
 you who go to the Rock of Jerusalem , pass over my body
 You shall not pass" (Jayyusi 1992 : 151).

This nameless Palestinian hero who roams the Palestinian cities and refugee camps usually fights the enemy until the end and if he is killed, he falls as a hero and a martyr. He is ready to die for the sake of his homeland confronting the invaders. In Palestinian poetry, the heroes who defend the Palestinian cities , however, are not reduced to a state of complete victimization because this would mean the announcement of the end of resistance and the disappearance of the Palestinian dream of independence .

The Palestinian City between Reality and Myth

In 1954, the Egyptian poet, Salah Abdul-Sabur wrote a poem entitled "The Tartars Have Struck" which explores the Israeli aggressive attack on the village of Qibya, during which seventy five innocent citizens were killed and the village was eradicated. In The poem,

Qibya is introduced as "our city", a motif which leads to critical misunderstanding since critics analyzed Abdul-Sabur's poem linking it to the tripartite assault against the Suez Canal cities – in Egypt – during the 1956 war ignoring the poem's date of publication in "Al-Adab Journal" in February 1954. The poet addresses Qibya crying: "The Tartars have struck / bringing our innocent city into destruction" (Abdul-Sabur 1986: 27^v). By the end of the poem, the Palestinian town was left in ruins and the Tartar soldiers were intoxicated by their victory. The analogy which links the Tartars with the Zionists emphasizes the brutality of the invaders. Explicitly, the poet uses the barbaric history of the Tartars –who burnt the ancient city of Baghdad- as inter-text to explore the savagery of the Zionist assault on the armless Palestinian citizens in Qibya.

Moreover, in Palestinian poetry, there is almost no difference between the image of the city and that of the village because both of them are objects to tyranny and persecution. Recognizing that both the Palestinian city and the village have been ravaged by brutal enemies and vicious colonizers, the Palestinian poet Yusuf al-Khatib deals with them as symbols of a lost homeland and a wounded dignity. In "The Lake of Olive Trees", he reveals his nostalgia for his lost homeland and ruined village. Expressing his longing for Palestine, the Palestinian poet seeks news about his homeland by inquiring from the wind, the stars and the birds. Being worried about his house or village becoming Israeli property, he tries to appease his anxiety by asking the wind to tell him all about his home and village. The wind reports bad news – the olive tree in the courtyard of their house has wilted^{vi}.

Further, the house itself has become dreary sinking into despair. He turns to the stars but they confirm what the wind has said. Being depressed, he pleads with the flocks of birds to carry the following message to his village:

Oh, our village
I sent to you flocks of birds
to them I said: when you reach our village beside the river
alight while and tell our home all about
our grief
Oh our village
I swear by your soil
we have not tasted sleep
tearful because of our separation from you"
(al-Khatib 1957 : 17^{vii}).

This kind of nostalgia for the Palestinian homeland which depicts the Palestinian village/city as a victim disappeared completely from Palestinian poetry after (1967). Instead of the victim / city, we have the heroic city, "the city as an abode of resistance, martyrs and as a grave" for the invaders .

The Palestinian poet, Mureed al-Barghouthi is also obsessed with the Palestinian cities associated with struggle, resistance and martyrdom. In his poem "In the Heart", collected in his Poetic Works, he says:

There are planets in the universe

our land is a planet
 which consists of continents
 Asia is a continent
 which consists of countries
 Palestine is a country
 In Palestine there are cities
 In the cities there are streets
 There is a demonstration in the streets
 There is a young man in the demonstration
 There is a heart in the breast of the young man
 There is a bullet in the heart of the young man”
 (al-Barghouthi 1997 : 378-79^{viii}).

Unlike other Arab poets who depict their cities as embodiment of political corruption, moral stagnation and submission, al-Barghouthi focuses on the issues of protest, resistance and martyrdom integral to life in the Palestinian city under occupation. Linking the demonstrations in the streets of the Palestinian cities with other geographical details about the location of Palestine - an Arab country in the continent of Asia - as part of the earth which in its turn is part of the planets that make up the entire universe, the poet provides the Palestinian cause with global dimensions affirming its centrality to the entire world. In “I Put the Right Hand on the Right Cheek”, al-Barghouthi refers to the cities of Jerusalem, Haifa and Acre recalling memories of Palestinian children in these beautiful cities and comparing them with the painful memories of Palestinian refugees living in cities of exile like Rome, Paris and Athens. Further, in his impressive poem “Acre and the Roar of the Sea”, al-Barghouthi captures scenes of resistance and struggle (though the poet does not like to be categorized as a resistance poet) in different Palestinian cities such as Acre, Jerusalem, Ledda, and Gaza.

The poet affirms that “there is a feeling of unrest” everywhere in the occupied territories and “sadness is on the thresholds”/ “this is the sea, its waves are colliding violently into the shore, this is the assault”. At this crucial moment, the city of Acre realizes the meaning of betrayal and treason: “the smell of betrayal is in the air and the stars conceal their evil”. Historically, the city of Acre, during one of the ancient European crusades, was re-occupied by the enemies due to Arab-Arab conspiracy. The allusion to betrayal and conspiracy in ancient Acre evokes similar incidents in contemporary Palestinian history prior to 1948 war until the Camp David treaty and the Oslo clandestine agreements. The city of Acre, in the poem, is personified as a woman who realizes that “the time of joy is far-fetched” once she (the city) sees “the smile of the wolf and the laugh of the peacock” (al-Barghouthi 1997:605). The allusions to the “wolf” and the “peacock” refer to Arab and non-Arab leaders participating in disgraceful treaties ignoring the plight of the Palestinian people. Then, the poet refers to other cities in Palestine, which like Acre, are threatened by ruthless enemies and local conspiracies: “Jerusalem turns into a demonstration/ The demonstration goes to Nazareth and to the besieged city of Gaza/ which lives in a state of protest” (al-Barghouthi 1997 : 607).

In the poetry of al-Barghouthi, the inhabitants of the Palestinian cities are not alien residents like their counterparts in western and Arabic poetry, but they live in a constant state of revolution: “They are involved in demonstrations even in their silence / even in their hunger and even when they are threatened”. The sound of “the Galilee horses” which is heard in the city of Ledda is an affirmation of the existence of a unified / collective Palestinian consciousness that challenges foreign colonizers and Arab conspirators:

Acre lives in the hearts of people
 in the grains of wheat and in the church bells
 in the burned rubber tires in the streets of the cities
 in the silence of strikes
 in the silence of the fishermen
 in the wedding ceremonies
 in the name of a newly born baby
 in the blood gushing out of the necks of the horses
 Acre moves from one place to another whispering its secret^{ix}”
 (al-Barghouthi 1997 : 608-9).

The resilience and the steadfastness of the city of Acre is a symbol of the spirit of resistance that sweeps other Palestinian cities. In this context, al-Barghouthi points out that “The cities in my homeland are similar despite their differences” because all the people of these cities are determined to challenge “the Zionist police” and “the machine guns^x”. In the Palestinian cities, the poet continues, “the books of the students confront” “the army vehicles” affirming the importance of education for the Palestinians. The poet ends the poem emphasizing that the city of Acre, like all Palestinian cities, will continue its journey of pain, struggle and resistance, “between the dead and their butchers/ between the wolf and the peacock” carrying “the smell of history in the palms of her hands” (al-Barghouthi 1997: 615).

Like Acre, the ancient Palestinian city, the other cities of Palestine are the oldest in the world and they have played a vital role in the progress of great civilizations. Each one of the Palestinian cities has a different story and each one gains its reputation due to historical or religious or political factors. Cities like Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron are extremely important as a result of their religious status. While cities like Jericho, Nablus, and other ancient cities have played a great role in history, other cities such as Gaza, Jaffa, Haifa, Galilee and Ramallah gained their reputation due to their political, economic, geographical and strategic significance. In history and literature the Palestinian city, unlike other Arab cities, has been given tremendous importance due to its historical and political significance.

Portrayed either as besieged or occupied by usurpers, the Palestinian city in Arabic poetry has occupied a paramount position because of its history of resistance and struggle. Unlike Arab cities, often associated with alienation, loneliness, tyranny and political conspiracies, the Palestinian city is never a Sodom or a Gomorrah, never a source of menace or repository of sordidness and corruption; it is, rather, a victim city. In “The Clock”, the Palestinian poet, Samih al-Qasim describes the Palestinian city as a shield

challenging the enemy's war machine for ages. The Palestinian city was dominated by the invaders but it never surrendered:

My city fell to the enemy
 yet the clock continued ticking on the wall
 our own neighborhood was demolished
 the street fell / yet the clock remained ticking on the wall
 my house crumbled to ruin
 even the wall fell / But the clock remained
 ticking on and on”

(Jayyusi 1992 : 254).

In addition to the cities mentioned above, other Palestinian cities are immortalized in the poetry of Arab / Palestinian poets. For example, Hasan al-Bhairi speaks about Acre and Jaffa describing the streets of Jaffa after the Palestinian catastrophe in 1948. Moreover, Salem Jubran reveals his feelings toward the Safad city:

Oh Safad, I have become a stranger in your streets
 you are also a stranger to me / your houses ask me to leave
 And your people force me to go away”

(Cited in Dahbour 2004 : 6^{xi}).

In his famous “Poem of the Land”, Mahmoud Darwish evokes the city of Galilee:

I am the son of simple words, I am the martyr of the map
 the family apricot blossom
 O you who grip the edge of the impossible
 From the beginning until Galilee
 Return to me my hands, return to me my identity”
 (Jayyusi 1992:148).

In the same poem, the poet challenges the enemies swearing that the invaders will not be able to usurp the Palestinian land forever. Here, he invokes the images of Nablus and Jerusalem:

O you who go to the Mountain of Fire [the city of Nablus]
 pass over my body, you who go to the Rock of Jerusalem
 pass over my body
 You shall not pass: O you who pass over my body
 I am the land in a body
 You shall not pass
 I am the land awakening
 You shall not pass
 I am the land but you who walk over the land
 in her awakening
 you shall not pass
 you shall not pass”

(Jayyusi 1992 : 151).

Further, in his poem, "Here We Will Stay", Tawfiq Zayyad challenges the invaders who seek to transfer all the Palestinians outside their cities and native homeland:

In Ledda , in Ramala, in the Galilee
 we shall remain
 like a wall upon your chest
 and in your throat
 like a shard of glass
 a cactus thorn
 and in your eyes a sandstorm"
 (Jayyusi 1992:486).

Moreover, Samih al-Qasim, in "Girl from Rafah", narrates a story of the heroism and sacrifice of a girl from the small city of Rafah. Even when the city is under curfew, its inhabitants are engaged in the ritual of heroism and sacrifice:

the acacia is drooping
 Rafah's gates are sealed by wax
 and locked by curfew
 the girl's job
 carry bread and bandages
 to a wounded fighter
 she has to cross a street
 watched by foreign eyes
 tracked by gun-sights.

In spite of these difficulties, the girl insists on completing her mission: "the door of a house in Rafah/ opens like a wound" (Jayyusi 1992 : 380). By the end of the poem, the Israeli soldiers arrested the girl and in the morning "a court is held in session for the criminal / for Fatima , child of eight" (Jayyusi 1992 : 381).

Moreover, in "The Children of Rafah", Samih al-Qasim describes a scene of resistance in the besieged city:

at the outskirts of town
 the children of long histories
 were gathering books,
 pictures frames, and tent pegs,
 to build a barricade
 block the path of Darkness "
 (Jayyusi 1992 : 47).

Here, Rafah is not the city of defeat that haunts the rest of Arabic poetry. But Rafah is depicted as the city of resistance after the defeat, which, in the words of Mahmoud Darwish, "bursts with anemones". He exclaims, in "The Abyss of the City":

Oh noble City of ours!
 The cement of your streets has acquired a pulse now
 and every arch a braid "
 (Darwish 1980: 401).

Darwish sees "the last strong-hold" not only in his own city, but in Beirut as well. To him, Beirut is the last remaining anchorage for a people denied the shelter of their own city.

According to Salma Jayyusi "the symbol of Palestine lost and Palestine regained , of innocent lost and innocent regained is the city , mainly the city of Jaffa^{xiii}". In spite of the fact that cities such as Jerusalem, Haifa, Acre, Safad, Gaza and others have been evoked in Arabic/Palestinian poetry, "Jaffa remains the central symbol" according to Jayyusi, probably because "the orange , one of Palestine's most inspiring flora symbols, is connected to Jaffa, where so many Arab orange groves flourished in Palestine prior to 1948" (Jayyusi 1992:35). In addition to what Jayyusi said, it is relevant to argue that Jaffa has been a significantly strategic town throughout history. The city has been the object of conquests and invasions since ancient times. A list of those who occupied Jaffa includes Thutmosis The Third , King David , King Solomon, the Assyrian king Senocherib , the Persians, the Crusaders, the British and finally the Zionists in 1948.

During the 1950's, the decade which followed the Arab defeat in the 1948 war, the occupation of more Palestinian territories and the establishment of the state of Israel, a considerable body of largely declamatory verse was written about Palestinian cities by Arab poets who envisioned themselves as participating at the discursive level in the Arab struggle for the liberation of Palestine. During his Socialist / Realist stage, the Iraqi poet, Abdul-Wahhab al-Bayati wrote the best well-known poems ever written on a Palestinian city, "Odes to Jaffa", included in his anthology *Glory to Children and Olive Trees* (1956). The Jaffa poem sequences incorporate five poems: "A Song", "Barbed Wire", "A Letter", "Glory to Children and Olive Trees" and "The Return".

The first poem "A Song", portrays the impact of colonization on the local inhabitants of Jaffa juxtaposing the city with Jesus Christ:

O Jaffa, your Jesus is in bonds,
 Naked, daggers tearing at him,
 beyond the crosses of borders
 And above your domes a cloud is weeping
 And a bat flying.
 O red rose, O Spring rain
 They said – while in your two eyes the day is dying
 And tears dry out despite the sorrow of the heart-
 They said: "Delight in the scent of the ox-eye of Najd,
 And ashamed I wept:
 "For after this evening the ox-eye will be no more"
 For the door has been slammed shut by Judas and the road
 Deserted, and your dead children
 Without graves, they're eating
 Their livers, and on your sidewalk they slumber"
 (Khadhim 2001:90).

The opening lines which incorporate Christian symbols introduce Christ and the city of Jaffa as part of a community of suffering.

Like Christ on the cross, the inhabitants of Jaffa are crucified by the invaders on daily basis. The meaning of the opening lines is affirmed by references to “Jesus in bonds”, “naked daggers tearing at him”, “the door” which “has been slammed shut by Judas” and the “dead children without graves”. While the primary symbolism of “A Song” is integrated in the crucifixion of Christ, there is also emphasis on the suffering of the city’s refugees at the hands of Judas who shuts the gates of the city and the door of mercy on their faces: “the door has been slammed shut by Judas”. Due to the brutality of the colonizers, the city of Jaffa has been weeping and her tears dry out despite the anguish of the heart: “And tears dry out despite the sorrow of the heart”. The light over Jaffa’s domes turns into darkness (due to colonization and occupation) which is a suitable environment for the bat, a symbol of the invaders of the city. The reference to ancient Arab tribes and the use of Najd interchangeably with Jaffa is an affirmation of the Arab identity of the city^{xiii}.

Jerusalem in Arabic / Palestinian Poetry

The historical city of Jerusalem is important not only to the Arabs (Muslims and Christians) but also to the Jews. The great Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai, using the Old Testament as inter-text, says:

If I forget thee, Jerusalem,
Then let my right be forgotten.
Let my right be forgotten, and my left remember.
Let my left remember, and your right close
And your mouth open near the gate^{xiv}

Unlike other cities, associated with alienation, loneliness, tyranny and corruption, Jerusalem does not represent a menace to its Jewish people. Further, its people do not bear any hatred or rancor toward it, therefore

I shall remember Jerusalem
And forget the forest- my love will remember,
Will open her hair, will close my window,
Will forget my right,
Will forget my left
If the west wind does not come
I’ll never forgive the walls,
Or the sea, or myself.
Should my right forget
My left shall forgive "

(Amichai 1987:13).

To the Jewish-Israeli poet, Jerusalem is different from any other city in the world— it is a city of the ancestors and ancient Jewish empires mentioned in the Talmud, thus he is ready to sacrifice his blood defending the city:

I shall forget all water,
I shall forget my mother.
If I forget thee, Jerusalem,

Let my blood be forgotten.
 I shall touch your forehead,
 Forget my own,
 My voice change
 For the second and last time
 To the most terrible of voices
 Or silence "

(Amichai 1987:13).

As in Arabic poetry, Jerusalem is viewed, in the poetry of Yehuda Amichai as a woman, a mother. In this connection, Billie Melman discusses the tendency of British evangelists to feminize Jerusalem and domesticate its geography. Out of love and devotion, British evangelists compare Jerusalem to a woman whom "we have not seen for many years, and who has passed through a great variety of changes and misfortunes, which have caused the rose on her cheeks to fade, her flesh to consume away, and her skin to become dry and withered, and have covered her face with the wrinkles of age; but who still retains some general features, by which we recognize her as the same person, who used to be the delight of the circle in which she moved" (Cited in Shamir 2003 : 38).

After the occupation of Eastern Jerusalem in the aftermath of the Arab military defeat in the 1967 war, Arab poets denounced Arab regimes who failed to defend the holy city. In "Sons of a Bitch / Awlad Al-Kahba" verses , the most famous section of Mudhafar al-Nawwab's provocative long poem *Watariyyat Layliyya / Night Strings*, the Iraqi poet castigates the defeated Arab rulers accusing them of being responsible for the loss of Jerusalem and Palestine. Using Arabic slang and obscene rhetoric, the poet cries in anger:

Oh sons of a bitch, (Awlad Al-Kahba)
 Jerusalem is the bride of your Arabism
 why did you send the night adulterers to her bedroom
 while shrinking cowardly behind the doors
 watching the rape scene
 and listening to her screams and appeals for help
 while her virginity is being violated
 all of you attempt to withdraw your swords
 pretending to avenge her raped honor
 instead of slaying the rapists
 you start shouting at her
 demanding her to be silent and conceal the scandal
 you even force her to shut up her mouth to preserve Arab honor from disgrace
 you are really very honorable men
 shame on you , shame on all of you
 sons of a bitch
 How can a raped lady remain silent?^{xv}

(Al-Nawwab 1985:50).

Portraying Jerusalem as a virgin lady raped by alien invaders , al-Nawwab seeks to emphasize the Arab identity of Palestine and its holy city as well as the brutality of the

colonizers. By depicting the Arab rulers as a group of cowards manipulated by imperialistic forces, the poet affirms the impossibility of liberating Palestine or establishing a Palestinian state under the current political circumstances in the region. In an angry tone, al-Nawwab addresses Arab leaders and policy makers:

Sons of a bitch
 I have to reveal your dirty reality
 the truth is that even the most pious and virtuous among you
 Those who claim to be patriotic, chaste and righteous
 are more disgusting than any nasty-smelling pig barn
 now, it is time to expose your scandals to the public eye
 now it is time to strip you of your hypocritical masks
 sons of a bitch, you have assassinated the happiness of Arab people
 In all the capital cities of the Arab world”
 (Al-Nawwab 1985 : 51).

Being reluctant to defend and restore the Arab land and holy cities that Israel has taken by force, the Arab rulers, according to the poet, should be assassinated and buried in the dunghill of history. In order to promote feelings of scorn and shame toward Arab rulers, the poet effectively visualizes the rape scene where Jerusalem, a sacred symbol for Muslim, Christian and Jews, is being abducted and ravaged by the invading enemies in the presence of all Arab rulers who are nothing but shameless eyewitnesses of the crime.

Moreover, the Iraqi poet, Hamid Said, in “Dying at the Edge of Death” personifies Jerusalem as an Arab lady, forced by the Mongol horses to stay in exile:

In the streets of Madrid, Jerusalem removes her blouse
 She is naked and hungry
 Looking out of the windows in the evening
 Madrid recognizes her and closes
 all the doors
 Fear drinks the glass of sweet wine
 And Madrid drinks the blood of her own children”.
 (Jayyusi 1987: 398).

Further, in a poem entitled “My Nation” from his anthology *The Fever / Al-Humma*, the Saudi poet, Ghazi al-Qusaibi rejects any peace negotiations that would lead to the loss of Jerusalem and the humiliation of the Islamic / Arab nation. In the poem, Jerusalem is depicted as a prey in the claws of invading monsters. The Saudi poet cries in agony: “we opened the doors of Jerusalem to the usurpers^{xvi}” after we allowed them to occupy the West Bank, therefore, “the Palestinian land is bleeding and groaning”. Further, in a poem entitled “Beirut” from the same anthology al-Qusaibi emphasizes that all the occupied Arab territories could not be restored through peace negotiations with a ruthless enemy. Occupied Arab land could only be restored by blood sacrifices and bleeding wounds :

Occupied territories will never be restored
 unless they are burned by fire and washed by the blood of bleeding wounds

on the day of liberation”
(Al-Qusaibi 1982 : 38).

In “Jerusalem and the Hour”, a poem by Rashid Husain, a Palestinian poet who is concerned mainly with the predicament of the Palestinians under siege both in the occupied territories and in exile, the poet affirms the continuity of Arab resistance against the forces of evil:

the hour in Jerusalem turned into struggle
All those born in Jerusalem shall be made into bombs
And they are right
All born in the shadow of bombs
shall become bombs.

The poet speaks about the victims of the Israeli occupation of the holy city :

In Jerusalem the hour was : Someone killed
Someone wounded, a child’s legs
stolen from him by napalm
The legless child walks on his hands and eyes
to carry dreams, bread and greetings to a fighter
whenever a child passes
those who occupy and rule Jerusalem
A child, a little girl
their eyes and their devices
search in her breast, her womb, her mind
for weapons, for a bomb.

(Jayyusi 1992:272).

The poet argues that regardless of civilian victims, and loss, the Palestinians are “a nation which despite / sedation and stupor / will one day rise in wrath” (272). In a related context, Muja’hid Abdul-Moneim Muja’hid, an Egyptian poet, speaks about Jerusalem in “A Sunflower Looking for the Sun” saying:

When I was about to give my thanks
you redirected the steps of my heart
toward Jerusalem
Address your prayer of thanks to the heart, you said
or to Jerusalem, for both have
come to be my sun
your love has changed me in this
Barbarian age
No longer am I a sunflower”

(Enani 1996:207).

In his study *The Religious Factor in Modern Egyptian Poetry*^{xvii}, Saad al-Jizawi argues that in the 1930’s and 1940’s, Egyptian and Arab poets wrote poems dealing with Jerusalem on the occasion of (Al-Isrā-Wal-Me’rāj) . These poems are not only related to the annual religious festival -Al-Isrā-Wal-Me’rāj- but also to the Palestinian problem and the political future of the holy city. In the anniversary of Al-Isrā-Wal-Merāj and during

similar religious festivals, such as the beginning of Ramadan, many Arab poets wrote poems about Jerusalem blending between the religious theme and the political question of Palestine. For example, Mohamed Al-Khalifa, a poet from Algeria, wrote in 1937 a poem expressing his grief over the violence committed against the Palestinians in Jerusalem: “ In Weeping Jerusalem, atrocities continue, misfortunes and obsequies have overwhelmed us / O blessed month [Ramadan] will it happen that our distress may come to an end / and our glorious past is resurrected”^{xviii}.

Religious occasions such as the beginning of Ramadan and the night of Al-Isrā-Wal-Merāj arouse feelings of sadness as they remind the poets of the failure of the Arab governments to liberate Jerusalem. These occasions also remind the poet of the gloomy fate of Jerusalem and its people and arouse suspicion and fear about the future of the Palestinian cause. Further, Sulaiman Zahir, a poet from Lebanon wrote a poem in 1931 titled “Memory of Al- Merāj^{xix}” recalling Prophet Mohamed’s legendary journey to Jerusalem in order to remind the members of the General Islamic Congress that they were holding sessions on a “blessed night” and in a “blessed place” (Zaher 1954 : 15) therefore during the celebration of that religious event – the anniversary of Al-Isrā-Wal-Merāj – some actions should be taken to rescue Jerusalem .

Until 1948, the fear about the future of Jerusalem was shown through recollection of the Muslim exodus from Andalusia . The poets who recalled the Muslim experience in ancient Spain tend to compare what happened to the Muslims in Andalusia during the fifteenth century with the current state of affairs in Palestine affirming that Jerusalem might be lost like Grenada, the last Muslim kingdom in Andalusia due to Arab / Muslim lack of vigilance and political will. The Lebanese poet, Mohamed Sham-Al-Din, in his volume, *The Refugee Woman* (1951) recalls the Muslim loss of Spain using the Grenada motif as an objective correlative to signify the expected loss of Jerusalem :

Memories of Grenada and the Spanish tragedy
reawaken in my heart
yet a tear in the eye I held back
seeing today as no more than a copy of yesterday.^{xx}

Further, the Iraqi poet, Mohamed Mahdi al-Jawahiri in “Bleeding Palestine” written after the tragic Buraq events (ethnic confrontations between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem) in the late 1920’s, draws an analogy between Jerusalem and Andalusia. This analogy seems to have been prompted by the state of inertia exhibited by the Arabs which was similar to that of the Muslims in Spain in the past:

The wounds of Jerusalem have overflowed, recalling a wound in Andalusia that has not healed
like Andalusia, the Muslims will lose Jerusalem and even make the Kāba and Al-Haram follow.^{xxi}

(Al-Jawahiri 1980:475).

The reference to Jerusalem in Arabic poetry is also associated with allusions to early Muslim/ Arab heroes particularly Saladin. The Arab poets, in fact, refer to names of ex-Arab / Muslim heroes as sources of inspiration in order to kindle the flames of courage in

the hearts of the modern Arabs. Using Islamic figures such as Saladin, who crushed the crusaders at the horns of Hittin and Khalid bin Alwalid, the famous warrior in the early Islamic era who defeated the Persians, the poets aim to remind the Arab readers of the glorious past of their ancestors at a time Jerusalem is in danger.

The great Muslim hero, Saladin (Salah Al-Din al-Ayyubi) derives his reputation from his historical victory over the crusaders at the battle of Hittin (1187 AD). The hero who regained Jerusalem from the crusaders and defeated them, was viewed in the 1930's/1940's within the context associated with the attempts to defend Jerusalem against the new crusaders. The Christian Arab poet, Rashid Salim al-Khuri called upon Saladin to rise from his grave, in order to rescue the holy city which he rescued in the past in order to teach the "new crusaders" another lesson. In his poem "The Balfour Declaration" (1929) he said: "Saladin! Your people are calling upon you to rise from the dead / your chivalry/ would not allow you to sleep while they are on the alert / The crusaders have forgotten the lesson / they received at your hands / So come back and remind them^{xxii}" (Al-Khoui 1962:77).

After the Buraq events in 1929 – the clashes between Palestinians and the Jews and the burning of Al-Aqsa Mosque – the call for Jihad / holy war to defend Jerusalem against the new crusaders represented a distinguishable trend in Arabic poetry at that time. Al-Mahjari poet, Abu Al-Fadl al-Walid in "The Song of Jerusalem" addresses Jerusalem asking the city to remind the West of what happened to their armies when they invaded Palestine "filled with hopes and aspirations" but gained nothing except "death and failure". The call for Jihad reaches a climax in Ali Mahmoud Taha's famous poem "Call for Self-Sacrifice". The poem was written just before the armies of several Arab countries were about to enter Palestine during the 1948 war. In the poem, eight of its twenty verses begin with the word "brother".

In the beginning of the poem, the poet points out that "the oppressors– the invaders" have exceeded all limits in their persecution of the Arabs in Palestine. He sees Jihad as inevitable and obligatory. Taha goes on to justify his call for Jihad on the grounds that Jerusalem, the holy city was in a critical situation: "Brother, the enemies are sharpening their knives to slay our sisters in Jerusalem^{xxiii}" (Taha 1962 : 223). Taha makes it clear that both Christian and Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem were threatened. Thus, Muslims and Christians have to fight side by side for their common cause: "Brother! Hurry to the Qibla (prayer direction toward Kaba) of East and West to protect church and mosque". Moreover, Ilyya Abu Madi, the Christian Mahjari poet speaks about Jerusalem in a different manner. Speaking to the Zionists, he says that Balfour should have given them a British territory in London city, not an Arab one because "London is more spacious than our Jerusalem and you [the Zionists] are close friends with the British people".

In *The Land of Martyrs*, the Bahraini poet, Ibrahim al-Urayyid wrote a famous poem on Jerusalem and its future between "Zionist aggression and Arab greed". In his volume that contains an epic poem about the city, al-Urayyid reflects the notion that king Abdullah of Jordan had a major hand in the Arab defeat in the 1948 war because of his

desire to annex what might be left of Palestine to his kingdom. Because of this belief, Zafir, a Palestinian Arab shepherd tells his wife Da'ad that he will assassinate the king to rescue Jerusalem: "I am for it O Da'ad / May time fails me not / so that Jerusalem and the two Holy Mosques / can be relieved of his treachery^{xxiv}" (Al-Urayyid 1951 : 114).

The ugly image of the United States started to replace that of Britain as the guilty partner after the 1948 war due to the anti – Palestinian role played by the USA in the Arab-Israeli conflict which paved the way for the loss of Jerusalem. In his poem "The Tent and the Moon / Al Khayma wal-Qamar", Sabir Falhut attacks the American foreign policy in the Middle East in particular and in Third World Countries in general. Written after the 1967 war and the subsequent occupation of Jerusalem, the speaker in the poem addressed the American astronauts who landed on the moon in 1969 reminding them of the Palestinian refugees problem and the loss of Jerusalem as well as other cities and countries due to the arrogance and brutality of the American foreign policy:

From the destruction of up on the moon/ you applaud peace
But it was only the brutish mob / who could be deceived
You, while filling the earth with disease
in Jerusalem, Suez and Vietnam
Raise your voice with cheers and praise
for peace/ your canine teeth, your nails
in our wounded land/ in my torn tent
are witnesses to the crime"

(Sulaiman 1984 : p.111).

Like Sabir Falhut, Badr Shaker al-Sayyab also links the city of Jerusalem to the refugees' issue. In "The Caravan of the Wretched", the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees is not confined to the loss of land and homes and holy cities but they became deprived of human rights: "Not only did they drive us out of our/ villages and cities/ but also from the habitations of humanity" (Sulaiman 1984:112). The loss of the city here means the loss of one's home, going into exile to die there in silence.

Conclusion

Accompanying his father on a nostalgic visit to the hometown - Jaffa- he left in 1948 , Omar Al-Qattan, the Palestinian thinker, gave us the following account: "In that year the city surrendered to the Jewish forces on 13 May. Before its surrender, Jaffa had been one of Palestine's largest and wealthiest cities, with a population in excess of 120,000. Indeed in the 1947 UN partition plan for Palestine, the city had been given to the Arabs although it was located at the heart of the nascent Jewish state (Cited in Gohar 2002:49). Al-Qattan argues that as soon as the British government announced its intention to pull out of Palestine, Jaffa became the theatre of some of the most vicious fighting between the poorly armed Palestinian irregulars and both the Haganah and Irgun militias, equipped with the most sophisticated arms at that time.

By the time it surrendered, Jaffa had become a city of ghosts, its inhabitants dwindling to three or four thousand. The Haganah – which two days later was to become the official Israeli army – ordered all the remaining Palestinians to assemble in one

neighborhood, Ajami, where for over a year they were surrounded with barbed-wire fences and forbidden to leave. Indeed until the six-day war in 1967, the citizens of Jaffa could not leave their hometown without a special military permit; and until 1998, Tel Aviv municipality, which had annexed Jaffa, would very rarely issue an Arab with a building permit to erect or refurbish his or her house according to al-Qattan's narrative (Cited in Gohar 2002 : 63).

Addressed to the city of Jaffa, "Glory to Children and Olive Trees" (one of the "Odes to Jaffa") by Abdul-Wahhab al-Bayati intensifies the call to struggle celebrating the revolutionary spirit of the Palestinians and the Arab people as a whole. The Iraqi poet, using declamatory style, celebrates the fighting spirit of the army of Arabism, the refugee children in the tents of the city, the martyrs and the living who stand steadfast in the face of the enemy:

Glory to the martyrs and to the living from among my people
 And to those torn asunder, standing steadfast.
 Glory to children in the night of torment
 And in tents.
 Glory to olive trees in the land of peace
 To the small sparrows searching in the dust
 Of my field, and to the army garrisoned on the boundaries
 Of my great homeland
 The army of Arabism and salvation—
 Glory to poets and writers, lovers of life
 Waging, today, the fateful battle
 And striking at the hand of tyrants.
 Glory to the sick on the beds of weeping
 And to toiling women
 The mothers"

(Khadhim 2001:92).

In the "The Return", final poem in the "Odes to Jaffa" poetic sequence, the Palestinian refugees who were forced to leave Jaffa and other Palestinian cities and villages are depicted as heroes who, in spite of being hungry and scattered in the tents, possess the power to expel the oppressive night of occupation:

The night is banished by the lamps of the eyes
 Your eyes, O brethren scattered, hungry
 Under the stars.
 It is as if I dreamt that I paved with flowers and tears
 Your road./ And as if Jesus
 With you were retuning to Galilee
 Without a cross "

(Khadhim 2001:92).

The most striking reversal, in the entire "Odes to Jaffa" involves the figure of Jesus Christ who in the first poem is encountered in chains, naked with daggers tearing him on the cross. Nevertheless, the vision of Christ coming back with the other Palestinian

refugees who return to Galilee, in the final poem, embodies the poet's ultimate faith in the triumph of justice over oppression in Jaffa and Palestine. Christ who gets rid of his cross, like the Palestinian refugees who get rid of occupation and exile, is seen in the Galilee, represents testimony of the triumph of justice.

The Palestinian city occupied a significant position in modern Arabic poetry because it has been subjected to the violence, terrorism and brutality of the invaders. The terror connected with the Palestinian city is an "external" terror inflicted on it, not by its own people as in other Arab cities, but by alien forces of aggression. The Palestinian city is not only a victim city, but also a place of heroism, resistance and an abode for patriotic struggle. This image is distorted in the West, thus Nathalie Hardal points out sarcastically : "In America, I would be watching television listening to CNN saying the Israelis demand, terrorism must stop. Here all I see is inflicted terror, children who no longer know they are children. Milosevic is put on trial, but what about Sharon? I finally get dressed, stand directly in front of the window and choke on my spit as the gun shots start, the F-16 fighter jets pass in their daily routine" (Cited in Gohar 2008 : 35).

The Arab-American poet, Nathalie Hardal, describes the inhabitants of Gaza city as prisoners who live inside a death camp. As an American she feels ashamed of herself and thus she "hides like a slut, ashamed!" She describes the crippling impact of the war against the Palestinian citizens in Gaza City: "Every house is a prison, every room a dog cage." Palestinian popular dancing particularly the Dabka (Palestinian popular/ folkloric dance) is no longer part of life because the Palestinians are involved in funerals and the burial rituals of their dead children. According to Hardal Gaza is transformed into a detention camp. There are no streets, no hospitals, no schools, no airport, no air to breathe - "And here I am in a room behind a window, helpless, useless" , says the poet.

Like Hardal, Connie al-Remahi was agitated by the brutality of the massive Israeli war machine used against the armless children of Gaza. In a poem entitled "Gaza", al-Remahi describes the city of Gaza during the Second Intifada . Written in July 2002 , the poem discusses the inhuman murder of Palestinian children by the brutal and vicious Israeli war machine for no strategic reasons:

A tiny , lifeless body
 All wrapped in white,
 Funeral prayers are performed,
 Day turns to night
 Another faceless casualty
 Of injustice and hatred.
 How can one so innocent
 Suffer such a fate?"

(Al-Remahi 2002:8).

The poem refers to the atrocities committed by the Israeli army against the Palestinian refugees and the innocent children. al-Remahi continues:

His smile was a guiding light,
 His laughter, a sweet song.

A father's grief, a mother's tears
 Flowing all night long.
 Broken toys are scattered,
 Heaps of rubble on the ground.
 No more laughing children,
 Bitter weeping, the only sound.
 The innocence of childhood
 Savagely taken away.
 Hollow faces filled with pain,
 Look too old to play.
 A lifetime filled with sorrow,
 With rage and bitter pain"

(Al-Remahi 2002 : 88).

In the famous "Sons of a Bitch"/ "Awlad Al Kahba" section of *Watariyyat Layliyya/Night Strings*, al-Nawwab severely criticizes the Arab and Palestinian ex-revolutionaries who sold the cause of the Palestinian people abandoning the Palestinian refugees living as exiles in their native cities. Al-Nawwab reveals his scorn and condemnation of those political profiteers and opportunists who take advantage of the Palestinian tragedy making money and wealth at the expense of a bleeding nation:

When the night wears its veils
 The whisky cups crack swearing that Jerusalem
 is the bride of your Arab nationalism
 welcome, welcome
 Who sold Palestine other than the talkative revolutionaries?
 I have sworn by the bottleneck of wine
 though the cup is full only of killing poison
 And by this indigested revolutionary by the sea-oysters in Beirut
 developing a big belly till his neck becomes invisible
 I swear by the history of famine and starvation and the day of hunger
 No Arab will survive if we remain in the grip of these castrated
 opportunist rulers"

(Al-Nawwab 1985 37).

Furthermore, in "Jerusalem in Modern Palestinian Poetry", Farouk Mowasi argues that Jerusalem appears "in Islamic and nationalistic Arab poetry as a literary motif yet we do not have a sub-genre called the poetry of Jerusalem" (Mowasi 2004: 1). Further, Yusuf Hettinni in "Jerusalem in Arabic Poetry" points out that the Arab poets "have dealt with the city of Jerusalem in their poems depicting it from religious, historical and political perspectives concentrating on the struggle of its people against colonization" (Hettinni 2004 : 15). Apparently, the city of Jerusalem has occupied a high place in Arabic culture and literature. Al-Rahbani brothers wrote their famous lyric "The Flower of Cities", sung by the Lebanese singer, Fayruz, and became the most popular song in the late 1960's. The lyrics start with "it is for you that I pray, O city of prayers, for you I pray, O

Jerusalem". The lyrics include references to the city's synagogues , churches and mosques but the emphasis is on the history of Christianity and Islam in the city.

The city is threatened by the invasion of the colonizers so that "the child in the manger and his mother Mary are two crying faces / crying for those who have been dispersed". The lyrics , however , reveal a tone of resistance and defiance:

The gate of our city shall not be locked,
 For I shall go to pray.
 I shall knock at the gates,
 And I shall open up the gates
 O River Jordan, you shall wash
 My face with your holy water
 And you shall erase, O River Jordan,
 The remaining footprints of the barbarians"
 (Masaad 2003 : 26).

The emphasis on the Arab identity of Jerusalem and the necessity of continuing resistance and struggle is indicated by the following lyrics:

For Jerusalem is ours, and the house is ours
 With our own hands we shall restore the glory of Jerusalem
 With our own hands, we shall bring peace to Jerusalem
 Peace shall come to Jerusalem"
 (Masaad 2003 : 26).

Furthermore, Nizar Qabbani's famous poem "Now I Have Got a Rifle", sung by Umm Kulthum and set to music by great Egyptian musician Abdul-Wahhab, affirms the inevitability of supporting the armed struggle against the enemy and joining the revolutionary activities:

I have now got a rifle, to Palestine, take me with you
 To hills that are sad, like the face of the Magdalene
 To the green domes and the prophetic stones
 I am with the revolutionaries,
 I am of the revolutionaries
 Ever since the day I carried my rifle,
 Palestine became only meters away
 O revolutionaries, in Jerusalem, in Hebron,
 In Bisan, in the Jordan Valley, in Bethlehem,
 Wherever you may be O free men
 Advance, advance, advance to Palestine,
 For there is only one path to Palestine,
 And it passes through the barrel of gun "
 (Masaad 2003 : 28).

In a related context, Nizar Qabbani, in his elegy "Jerusalem", expresses strong sentiments about his love for the holy city, his pain over the occupation of the city and

his undying hope for its return. Here Jerusalem, the city of religions, is depicted as a beautiful girl with burned fingers:

I wept until my tears were dry
 I prayed until the candles flickered
 I knelt until the floor creaked
 I asked about Mohammed and Christ
 Jerusalem, luminous city of prophets,
 Shortest path between heaven and earth!
 Jerusalem, you of the myriad minarets,
 Becomes a beautiful little girl with burned fingers^{xxvii}

(Qabbani 2002:13).

In the following lines, the poet incorporate religious discourse alluding to major with Muslim and Christian narratives and myths:

City of the Virgin, your eyes are sad.
 Shady oasis where the prophets passed,
 the stones of your streets grow sad,
 the towers of mosques downcast.
 City swathed in black, who'll ring the bells
 At the Holy Sepulcher on Sunday mornings?
 Who will carry toys to children
 On Christmas Eve?
 City of sorrows, a huge tear
 Trembling on your eyelid,
 Who'll save the Bible?
 Who'll save the Qur'an?
 Who will save Christ, who will save man?"

(Qabbani 2002 : 13).

In spite of the gloomy atmosphere of the poem, it ends in an optimistic tone:

Jerusalem, beloved city of mine,
 tomorrow your lemon trees will bloom,
 your green stalks and branches rise up joyful,
 and your eyes will laugh. Migrant pigeons
 will return to your holy roofs
 and children will go back to playing.
 Parents and children will meet
 on your shining streets,
 my city, city of olives and peace?

(Qabbani 2002:13).

While Qabbani's representation of the Palestinian city is rooted in Christian overtones and optimistic allusions to a better future, Badr Tawfiq introduces a gloomy image of Jerusalem as a defeated and victimized city. Badr Tawfiq, an Egyptian poet, wrote a

poem entitled “Men on the Road” (1968) which also links the refugees’ issue with the fate of the city of Jerusalem. Written after the fall of the city during the six-day war (1967), the poem describes the expulsion of the Palestinian people from the city of Jerusalem. Tawfiq depicts one of the Palestinian refugees who is portrayed as helpless, overwhelmed by feelings of shame and regret:

He was standing on the hills
overlooking the city
carrying with him his self-blame and regret
he was on the run from both himself and others”
(Tawfiq 1968: 133).

The Palestinian cities, in general, due to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the plight of the Palestinian people - were depicted as cities of resistance, struggle, heroism and martyrdom. Thus, the Palestinian city has occupied a paramount position in Arabic poetry not only because it is related to the Palestinian history of resistance against colonization and imperialistic hegemony but also because it embodies a deep nostalgia for a lost homeland and an unquenchable dream of return to the roots. Thus, the Palestinian land, its villages and cities all are part and parcel of a lost and sought-after dream. Unlike other cities in East and West which are associated with alienation and the image of the Palestinian city is a symbol of resistance and sacrifice. The Palestinian city is defended by its people inside the occupied territory and is longed for by those who are forced to stay in Diaspora. Contrary to western cities which are populated by alien residents such as Eliot’s Prufrock, or Arab cities inhabited by strangers, outsiders and outcasts as in the cities of Badr Shaker al-Sayyab and Ahmed Abdul-Muti Hejazi, the Palestinian city is inhabited by heroes and martyrs. These heroes who appear in contemporary Palestinian poetry and take different shapes personify the anger and resistance of a nation that has refused to surrender at a time of crisis in a world full of treachery and hypocrisy. Representing the spirit of Palestinian people, the city heroes in contemporary Palestinian poetry embody an eternal and unlimited Palestinian dream of return, rebirth and liberation.

Notes

ⁱ See Eliot, T.S. “The Waste Land”. *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse*, ed. Philip Larkin. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. PP. 234-246.

ⁱⁱ See Eliot, T.S. “The Waste Land”. 1973.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more details see Shmuel Moreh . *Studies in Modern Arabic Prose and Poetry*. Leiden: Brill , 1988.

^{iv} The poem is translated by the author of the paper.

^v The poem was translated into English by Khaled Sulaiman in *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry*. London: Zed Books, 1984. P. 153.

^{vi} For more details see Khaled Sulaiman. *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry*.

^{vii} For more information see the translated text in Sulaiman, Khaled. *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry*. London: Zed Books, 1984.

^{viii} The poem is translated by the author of the paper. Note : Citations from Arabic poetry and prose are translated into English by the writer of this article unless names of other translators are mentioned in the text of the paper and the "Works Cited".

^{ix} See Jarryusi, Salma, ed. *An Antholog of Modern Palestinian Poetry*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992.

^x See Ismail, Afif. "An Interview with the Great Palestinian Poet, Mureed Albarghouthi". *Sudanese on Line*, vol. 631 (2003): 1-7.

^{xi} The poem is translated by the author of the paper.

^{xii} For more details see the introduction of Jarryusi, Salma, ed. *An Antholog of Modern Palestinian Poetry*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press,

^{xiii} For more details , see Kadhim, Hussein. "Abdul Wahhab Al-Bayati's Odes to Jaffa". *Journal of Arabic Literature* 32 (2001): 86-106.

^{xiv} See "Jerusalem", from "Songs of Jerusalem and Myself", Jerusalem: Schochen, 1987.

^{xv} The poem is translated by the author of the paper.

^{xvi} The poetry of Al-Qusaibi is translated by the author of the paper.

^{xvii} For more details , see Al-Jezawi, Saad Al-Din. *The Religious Factor in Modern Egyptian Poetry*. Cairo: The Supreme Council for Arts and Social Sciences, 1964.

^{xviii} The poem is translated by Khaled Sulaiman. For more details , see Sulaiman, Khaled. *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry*. London: Zed Books, 1984.

^{xix} The poem is translated by Khaled Sulaiman.

^{xx} The poem is translated by Khaled Sulaiman. For more details , see Sulaiman, Khaled. *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry*. London: Zed Books, 1984.

^{xxi} The poem is translated by Khaled Sulaiman.

^{xxii} The poem is translated by Khaled Sulaiman.

^{xxiii} The poem is translated by Khaled Sulaiman. For more details , see Sulaiman, Khaled. *Palestine and Modern Arabic Poetry*. London: Zed Books, 1984.

^{xxiv} The poem is translated by Khaled Sulaiman.

^{xxv} The poem was published in *Al-Khaleej Newspaper* (UAE) on 18 January (2002) p. 13.

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