Olive, The symbol of Resistance in Contemporary Arabic poetry

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Abstract
Symbol has had prominent artistic role in contemporary Arabic literature and especially resistance poetry. Poets have benefited from symbols in difficult conditions to express people`s pain and suffering in the form of poetry. Olive is one of these symbols which emerged in Arab poetry. It indicates Palestine, encouragement for fight, and rich Arab culture, etc. Olive is a symbol of resistance and endurance. This analytic-descriptive article aims to study olive as a symbol in Arab contemporary poetry.

Keywords: Symbolism, olives, resistance poetry, contemporary Arab poets.
Introduction

Resistance Literature

Seyed Ahmad Parsa defines Resistance Literature as “movement to cope with oppression, invasion, and occupation” and Resistance Literature is a literature which is committed to reflect the heroic resistance of a nation against oppression and occupation. (Parsa, 2009: 2). Proponents of freedom and patriotism have always resisted against enemies and bullying. This is a natural fact since human beings are created in a way that they cannot tolerate oppression and invasion. “Resistance is one human values used against oppression” (Belmeshiri, 1981: 20). Chehreh Ghani considers human’s effort to achieve freedom as long as history itself and pointed out to some inscriptions and paintings in this regard. The history of Resistance Literature, however, dates back to the Second World War and the role of Europe and especially France is highlighted more. “The efforts of nations to achieve freedom and release from oppression and invasion are as long as history”. To this end, Resistance Literature covers to the history of cruelty imposed by humans on humans: it traces responses to such oppressions. Undoubtedly, the history of Resistance Literature in the world is as old as human beings because Resistance Literature was born at the same time of the emergence of human race and formation of literature as well as the reaction of scholars against oppression and invasion. Therefore, all inscriptions, paintings, wall posts, whatever human beings use to show the protest against the inequalities and injustices of society, and efforts to meet such inequalities are concerns of Resistance Literature. Serious theoretical academic discussion toward resistance literature, however, dates back to the Second World War.

After the Second World War in Europe and especially France, scholars, influenced by war and resistance movement, concluded that they need to be actively involved in community events (ChehrehGhani, 2002: 14). Resistance Poetry is one of the most important factors playing a major role in preventing the remaining mix of Arabs in the occupied territories with reality and tragedy. Therefore, as long as poets transfer this tragedy by their technical and artistic nature in occupied territories, they will prevent any distortions in the case of Palestine. Simply, the issue of Palestine does not fade from memory with the passage of time but will become more and more important (Naghash, 1972: 230-231). Palestine Resistance Poet in occupied territories is considered the strongest resistance, the most furious hatred against the Zionists, and the most durable faith in victory. Perhaps, victory and overcoming the enemy would be accessible and close. “The resistance poetry stood against the Zionist propaganda despite frequent experienced persecution” (Mohammad Atiyeh, 1974: 45). Arab nations are unified one. Different factors such as common language, culture, history, and fate have created unity and solidarity. Therefore, Arab nationalism appears frequently in the contemporary literature consisting of thoughts, ideas, and concepts of nationalism toward the Arab nation. They always consider their land inseparable part of “Great Arabic Homeland”. They constantly try to encourage the Arab World to release Palestine from occupiers. Scholars and poets are offended by pain and suffering in Arab countries and try to
reflect the sorrow, sufferings, difficulties, and failures of their countrymen in their work. As a result, Palestine is specifically reflected in Arab national poetry.

Symbolism

Symbol has a state of secret and has always been associated with mystery. It is of imaginary elements which makes the word ambiguous. It is something to show something else through comparison or association such as white which is usually the symbol of innocence and red which shows the beauty (Mir Sadeghi, 1994: 281). Symbolism is one of literature maktabs created during the late 19th century. The first movement of this Maktab began in France with the representativeness of Charles Baudelaire. With his famous collection “Flowers of Evil”, he was able to create a new beginning for this type of poetry. This Maktab soon entered the world literature by some poets such as Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Varln (Seyed Husseini, 1997: 539). The emergence of Symbolism Maktab was, in fact, a reaction to romantic and artificial Arab style. The owners of this style used mysterious words and phrases and harmonic phrases (Fakhori, 2004: 662). In addition to diversity and wide range of meanings, stifling social conditions are of main reasons to tend to symbolic poetry clearly visible in Arab nations and specially Palestine. Using symbol is one of features of Arab contemporary poetry which makes it distinguishable from old poetry and literature (Ashri Zayed, 1980: 204).

The symbol of Olive

Olive tree is a full symbol that means peace, fertility, refinement, force, victory, and reward. In Christian’s and Jewish’s tradition, it is the symbol of peace. A pigeon brought a branch of olive tree for Noah at the end of storm. According to one of old stories, Cross of Christ is made up of olive tree and cedar tree. In Islam, olive is a central tree, it is the column of universe, and it is the symbol of global human and Prophet Mohammad. It is a holy tree associated with light and olive oil turns on lamps. In Ismailia religion, olive tree is the symbol of Imam on Mount Sinai. It is narrated that olive tree is a holy tree which is one of God’s names and other holy words are writing on its leaves. The blessing of olive oil can increase oil and becomes dangerous.

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light that He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah knows all things. [An-Nur/35]

This verse shows the holy nature of olive. Another interpretation considers olive equal to Ibrahim and his hospitality. The hospitality of Ibrahim is until the resurrection day. Ibrahim tree of believers is olive tree. Olive tree is certainly in paradise (Shovaliyeh and others, 2009, V. 3: 490-491).
The symbolism of olive in the poetry of Arab contemporary poets

Mahmoud Darvish

Mahmoud Darvish is one of leading Palestine resistance poets who frequently benefited from “olive” symbol. In addition to olive, he used other symbols in his resistance poets. Various studies indicate such issue. We only focus on “olive”. The first time Mahmoud Darvish used olive in his poets was in 1964 in his collection called “Olive Leaf”.

If olive tree knew his creator
The olive would become blood (Darvish, Olive Leaf, 1989: 40).

Since the beginning, olive was the symbol of occupied territory where its green nature is the symbol of life. Olive is an ever green tree.

Olive will stay ever green
Like a shield for the universe (Darvish, Olive Leaf: 41).

Olive is sometimes the symbol of encouragement for revolution.

For the olive jungle
I heard a sound
While I was on the fire
Telling crows not to destroy my body
I may come back home

And it is sometimes a symbol for Arab human degradation in Palestine.

The olive branch cried
Started to search for his originality
Also from the Sun and rain

Do not cry my love (Darvish, The last night, 1989: 188).
It is sometimes a symbol for peace and friendship. It is apparent in one of his famous poetries.

*It destroys lilies*

*By olive branches*

*With a chest full of leaves in the contemporary era* (the same: 195)

It is sometimes the symbol of green.

*He likes to search for lilies*

*Like a bird which welcomes the morning*

*Thus, olive branch fell* (the same: 200)

It is sometimes the symbol of renewal and birth of Palestine. Some Palestinians are killed every day and some are born.

*While he was writing some poetries*

*Olive tree will get its green nature again*

*And will pass the light from my home country again* (Darvish, 1989: 280).

In another collection, he used olive as the symbol of freedom and resistance for Palestine.

Hey friends, become unified

We do not feel homesick, we do not smell good adore

We move toward our eyes and against the country

And against the sky the poor become rich

Against the courts of the dead

And against the heredity of olive and Martyrs (Darvish, 1989: 563).

**Davoud Moalla**

Davoud is the poet of Quds who has discussed the conversation between martyr and olive tree in his ode called “martyr and olive tree”. As we can see, olive tree respects martyr and remembers him well. An image of resistance and communication are formed between martyr and olive tree. In this poetry, olive is a secret for occupied Palestine.
I followed when its green leaves vibrated while it was kissing me and watering me

It provided a shadow as shelter for me while I was close to October

Olive tree! Who has kissed his hand except me?

I am interested in you, if I fall down on this land, it is Ok with me

I bend my hands toward its roots, I take them to myself, and they bend me (Sarisi, 1996: 93).

Fadva Toughan

Fadavi is among female poets who has talked about the sorrow and suffering of Palestinians and encouraged people to fight. She calls her friend, olive, a lot whom she has slept under its shadow. She request olive tree to review her memories. Reviewing her poetry, we will realize that olive is a symbol of unity with nature and probably a symbol of renewal and birth of Palestine.

Here, here, in the shadow of my olive, the soul destroys all evils
And the body becomes excellent in its isolation and silence kills vain things
Here, here in the shadow of my olive in this region and mountain slope
I listen to the universe which narrates the eternality
I wish I could feel that the death would take you from me
I can see you while you have forgotten me here and you feel far away from me?
This body belongs to the soil and got a prize from my old hands
A power needs to get up from my grave and inspire the olive tree
The roots of olive tree are from my soil and they are always fresh
Its lights are emitted from my heart and it is inspired
Until my creator filled my nerve, root, and body
So he got up while shaking its leaves due to maturity created within him (Toughan, 1993: 22-23 and 18-20)

Ibrahim Nasr Allah
Olive is the symbol of freedom and resistance in Palestine. When some people became martyr while fighting with occupiers and again we can see the unity with nature in the poetry of Arabs.

**Samih Ghasem**

Samih Ghasem is the poet of resistance with multiple odes to defend his home country and occupied Palestine (Nezam Tehrani and Vaez, 1992: 88). Olive points out to Palestine first and the bright future and secondly Palestinian refugees to return to homes (Nezam Tehrani and Vaez 1992: 88).

*Those who are against me, you cannot keep me silent*

*Have you become angry at me? So I encouraged the city against you*

*These revolutionary individuals do not accept heart, they take oath to fathers and sunrise*

*To change prison cells into tombs for prisoners and keys*

*God’s light need to shine to the darkness and lighten friendship and happiness*

*It brings happiness for the olive as well and birds come back to the forests again*

*I fight against those who tried for the revolution* (Ghasem 1993: 141)

**Abu Ghasem Shabi**

He is one of romantic Syrian poets who used olive as the symbol of holiness. When he wants to talk about a holy war, he uses olive and spruce as symbols to release from all urban and cultural limitations and restrictions.

*Thus, he said and went to the cave for living in Quds*

*In the shadow of spruce, he continued living* (Shabi, 1996: 151)

**Adonis**

Adonis uses olive as the symbol of life and eternality. In his poetry, he wants falcon to flow boiling and green water like olive in his blood.

*If I could change the seasons like poets*

*If I could talk to the objects*
I would turn on the grave of horse-riding child next to the Euphrates
And my brother’s grave next to the Euphrates
Who died without being washed and praying and grave
And I told the objects and seasons
Be connected to me
Take me to the Euphrates
And empty it from green water like olive tree
In my blood and past history (Abu Hagheh, 1979: 511-512)

Saleh Mahmoud Havari

The poet talked about olive and land and separation from Haniyeh that is the symbol of home land. He also nags about exile, wound, and injury.

Because you are the most beautiful olive/ where land has not been able to grow/. On the bed of contemplation and thinking/. I am always afraid for you/ How cannot I be afraid/ while there is congratulation between us/ like the life between bread and salt/ and exile, wound, and injury. (Havari, 2006: p10)

Havari points out to fighters and heroes of his country. “Toyour Al-Balad” refers to teenagers and “Al-Ayadi” refers to the resistant. Khadijeh can be the secret of all Palestinian mothers. He refers Israelites as pigs. Pig is the symbol of dirt around the world. It is the symbol of egotism as well (Shovaliyeh et al. 2009, V. 3: 133). Chain is the symbol of suffering and pain. Olive is the symbol of resistance.

Hello to the olive which blood drops/ On the hill of dews/ His soul said hello to me/. Hello to all women / who said poetry for the martyrs/ on the hill of encouragement/ Hello to Ons/ Water spread under the war/ they water the lands with bucks/ hello to Khadijeh in EynEisheh region/ from her open eyes / she became old/ to support the birds of our country/ hello to all the forces/ hello to all eyes/. Who stated open in the war/ stared at enemies’eyes/ Hello to Ansheh/ on the way/. Among the pigs/ the woods would become guns/ Soon…soon (Havari, 1998: 8 and 9).

Conclusion

Studying the collection of contemporary Arab poetry especially after the attack of Zionists and the occupation of Palestine, we conclude that the symbol of olive is frequently used. Some of the usages are as follows: occupied land, resistance, encouragement to fight, the destruction of
the Arab people in Palestine, peace, modernization and birth, the sanctity of highly Arabic culture, tolerance and freedom, as well as permanent green signifies life and continuous resistance. Among poets, Mahmoud Darvish used the olive the most as symbol. Olive refers to Palestine and its related events.
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