



### Review Paper

# The Intersections between Native American and Anti-Colonial Palestinian Poetry

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#### Abstract

*This paper critically examines social, historical and human zones of contact between contemporary native American poets and Revolutionary Palestinian poets in order to illuminate issues of common interest that characterize the poetic discourse of both sides. Exploring political and textual spaces in these two poetic traditions, the paper illustrates the attitude toward native land, identity, struggle and other motifs that penetrate the poetic narrative of Palestinian and native American poets. The paper argues that in their attempt to undermine the imperialistic and hegemonic discourse that seeks to banish their colonized nations out of human history, Palestinian and native American poets have developed a counter poetics which affirms the values of resistance and struggle at crucial times particularly when their homelands and identities are in danger. The paper also demonstrates that while the anti-colonial Palestinian poetry engages revolution and resistance as a means to regain one's homeland and national identity, contemporary native American poetry is characterized by nostalgia and a longing for return to a pre-frontier/pre-imperialistic past which exists only in the imagination of the poets.*

**Keywords:** *Palestinians; Native Americans; Victimization; Violence; Zionism; Resistance; Revolution; Nostalgia.*

### Genocide, Marginalization and Victimization in Palestinian and Red Indian History

In a poem entitled “*Their Fathers*”, the Afro-American poet, Nikki Giovanni expresses her concern for the plight of the Palestinian people who are equated in their historical pain with other victimized and colonized races such as the Red Indians and the Africans. In her poem, Giovanni also draws an analogy between the Nazi holocaust of European Jews and the suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of the Zionist/Israeli army. Regardless of the great difference between the holocaust and any other massacre in the entire human history, Giovanni considered the suffering of the Jews and the plight of the Palestinians and the Red Indians as part of the cycle of violence and fear that has inflicted the modern world:

*undoubtedly there are those  
who are so unfeeling  
they cannot represent mental  
or emotional health  
we have seen the Germans  
and the Israeli reaction  
and the Palestinian response  
in our own time  
we know the truth  
of the Africans and Indians  
we know we have only begun  
the horror that is waiting  
south of our borders  
and south of our latitude  
blood perhaps should not  
all ways be the answer  
but perhaps it always is (Giovanni 1970:49).*

The analogy between the Palestinians and the native Americans, regardless of the wide cultural, religious, ethnic, geographical and historical differences between the two peoples, is striking in the sense that both of them have been subjected to genocide and persecution at the hands of imperialistic and hegemonic forces that aimed to banish them outside human history. The conditions of native Americans, isolated in reservations within the boundaries of their native land, are similar to a great extent, to the current situation of Palestinians who are forced to stay in refugee camps and Arab ghettos inside the borders of historical Palestine. The

unequal confrontations on the frontiers of Gaza and the West Bank between the Palestinian children armed with stones and the Zionist/Israeli military machine equipped with American war technology recalls to mind the confrontations on the Western frontier between the native inhabitants of America and the European colonizers who came to usurp their land and history.

Furthermore, the white American and Zionist narratives of their conflicts with the colonized nations (the Red Indians and the Palestinians) are similar in the context that both narratives are based on imperialistic and racial myths that ignore the existence of the colonized peoples viewing them as savages/terrorists who must be eradicated for the sake of a better world. In “*The Gift Outright*”, Robert Frost depicts the conflict between the white European colonizers and native Americans over the land from a hegemonic imperialistic perspective:

*The land was ours before we were the land's  
she was our land more than a hundred years  
before we were her people. She was ours  
in Massachusetts, in Virginia,  
but we were England's, still colonials,  
possessing what we still were possessed by,  
possessed by what we now no more possessed.  
Something we were withholding made us weak  
until we found out that it was ourselves  
we were withholding from our land of living,  
and forthwith found salvation in surrender.  
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright  
(the deed of gift was many deeds of war)  
to the land vaguely realizing westward,  
but still unstoried, artless, unenchanted,  
such as she was, such as she would become (Untermeyer 1962: 255).*

In Frost's poem, America is depicted as a gift given by God to the European colonizers. The promised/virgin land myth, which is created by the European colonizers on the frontier, is manipulated in the poem to justify colonization: “The land was ours before we were the land's / she was our land more than a hundred years / before we were her people”. Obviously, the Promised Land mythology is part of the colonial discourse which characterizes American poetry about the frontier experience. This kind of discourse unfortunately ignores the existence of the Red Indians, the indigenous people of America, dismissing them outside historical memory.

In *The Mountain Muse*, Daniel Bryan, an eighteenth century American poet reveals a similar racist/colonial ideology like the one which is partly responsible for the persecution and genocide of the Red Indians:

*where naught but beasts and bloody Indians  
dwelt throughout the mighty waste, and cruelty  
and death and superstition, triple leagued  
held there their horrid reign and imperious sway,  
the guardian seraphs of benign reform  
with keen prophetic glance, the worth beheld  
of the immense expanse, its future scales  
of freedom, science, and religious truth  
when by refinement's civilizing hand  
its roughness shall all be smoothed away  
O Yes; companions in the joys of bliss;  
we will refine, exalt and humanize  
the uncivilized Barbarians of the West (Bryan 1986: 365).*

The poem depicts the native inhabitants of America as beasts and cruel “barbarians” who must be eradicated without mercy. While the Red Indians, the colonized, are delineated, in Bryan's epic poem, as savages “the uncivilized barbarians of the West”, the European colonizers emerge as prophets and guardians of democracy and freedom. Their mission is to “refine, exalt and humanize” the savage colonized people on the frontier. The colonizers' narrative of the conflict contradicts with historical facts which affirm that the Red Indians were the victims of aggressive colonialist politics that aimed to eradicate their existence. In 1866, during the last decades of the frontier wars, General Sherman ordered his White American troops to eliminate the Red Indian tribes at any cost: “We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux even to their extermination, men, women and children” (cited in Drinnon 1980: 329). The hostile attitude toward the Red Indians undermines Bryant's colonial discourse which views the European invaders of America as “seraphs of benign reform” and carriers of the banners of civilization.

In the poems of Frost and Bryant there is an obvious distortion of history which is a basic feature of some colonial narratives. Both poems, deeply rooted in colonial myth, reflect the tendency of the white colonizers to obliterate the history of the colonized nation.

By ignoring the pre-colonial civilization of the Indians, the white colonizer's narrative seeks to dismiss them outside the realm of human history. Such colonial ideology considers the history of the colonized Indians, prior to the European invasion of America, as inconsequential; therefore, it gives priority to the colonizers, as a superior race, destined to dominate the land of the "barbarians of the West". The same ideology which advocates racism as a historical fact and affirms the superiority of the White European colonizers has provided a legitimate basis for the extermination and persecution of the Red Indians, the native inhabitants of the American continent.

While the Manifest Destiny myth implies that White Americans are ordained by God to humanize "the barbarians of the West" and bring European civilization to the American continent, the Zionist colonial myth seeks to dismiss Palestinians out of their homeland in order to establish a Zionist state which is an extension of Western democracy. The Zionist version of the frontier myth identifies the European colonizers of Palestine as God's chosen people dismissing Palestinians as savage Bedouins or vicious terrorists. In *The Haj*, for example, Leon Uris depicts the Arab Palestinians, the colonized, as dirty, ignorant and nomadic people living in barns and sleeping "on goatskin" (Uris 1985: 9). Uris also points out that the colonized Palestinians are wicked Bedouins<sup>i</sup> living in a society dominated by the desert law where the only way to achieve one's ambitions is "to destroy the man above and dominate the men below (Uris 1985: 17). He argues: "The Bedouin was thief, assassin, and raider and hard work [for him] was immoral. Despite his raggedness and destitution, the Bedouin remained the Arab ideal" (17).

While the colonized people of Palestine are presented as wicked and dirty assassins, the Zionist colonizer and Hagana fighter, Gideon Ash, the protagonist of the novel, is depicted as a good-looking man with "a neat blond beard and blue eyes" who came to modernize Palestine (Uris 1985: 20). In reality Gideon Asch establishes a militia of Zionist colonizers to terrorize the Palestinian citizens and dismiss them out of their homes<sup>ii</sup>: "A small elite force of Jewish night fighters given a free hand to strike where and when necessary without written orders (Uris 1985: 69). According to Uris's colonial narrative, the Zionist colonizers "will always be surrounded by tens of millions of hostile and unforgiving Arabs. If you are to survive you must establish the principle of retaliation" (Uris 1985: 70). This hostile attitude toward the native inhabitants of Palestine paved the ways for the mass-murder of thousands of Palestinian citizens at the hands of Zionist militias particularly in the 1940's and 1950's. The aggressive policy of the Zionist colonizers<sup>iii</sup> toward the armless citizens of Palestine was basically responsible for the refugee problem. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homeland in northern Palestine and were marginalized in refugee camps in southern Palestine or in neighboring Arab countries.

In his comment on the consequences of the DeirYasin massacre, in 1948, YigalAllon, a former Israeli cabinet member states: "We saw a need to clean the inner Galilee and to create Jewish territorial succession in the entire area of the upper Galilee. We, therefore, looked for means which did not force us into employing forces, in order to cause the tens of thousands of sulky Arabs who remained in Galilee to flee" (cited in Khalidi 1971: 42). In *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, Rosemary Sayigh argues that the massacre of DeirYasin village in 1948 – when more than three hundred Palestinian civilians were brutally slaughtered by the Zionist militias – aimed to cause a mass exodus of Palestinians. "After the massacre, Israeli radio stations and loudspeaker cars made use of the emotive words 'DeirYasin' to panic villages about to be attacked", says Sayigh. She adds: "once an atmosphere of terror had been created, it was easy to exploit it, to swell the exodus, with minimal losses to the attackers" (Sayigh 1979: 76).<sup>iv</sup>

In spite of the atrocities committed against the Red Indians and the Palestinians by hostile colonial forces, there has been an ardent attempt to falsify the history of colonization on both sides. Integrated in similar hegemonic policies<sup>v</sup>, both the Euro-American and Zionist/Israeli narratives of their conflicts with the Red Indians and the Palestinians have used colonial mythology as a means to justify the persecution and genocide of their victims. The colonial discourse that characterizes the American narrative of the frontier wars and the contemporary Zionist literature about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict seek either to depict the colonized people as savages/terrorists or ignore their existence<sup>vi</sup>. In *The Haj*, Uris advocates Theodore Herzl's argument that there is a people without a country (the Zionists/Israelis) and there is a country without a people (Palestine) and the problem of the Zionist European colonizers could be solved by transporting "the landless people into the un-peopled land" (cited in Goldman 1955: 6). Ignoring the right of existence of the Palestinians on their native land<sup>vii</sup>, Uris claims that when the Zionist European colonizers came to Palestine by the end of the nineteenth century they found a land "which is neither fish nor fowl, neither Syrian nor Ottoman, neither Arab nor Jewish, but a no man's land, hemorrhaging to death" (Uris 1985: 21). Uris's treatment of the Palestinian-Israeli issue reflects what Edward Said calls "the moral epistemology of imperialism".

In *The Question of Palestine* Said discusses the colonial attitude toward the people of Palestine. He argues:

*Both the British imperialist and the Zionist vision are united in playing down and even canceling out the Arabs in Palestine as somehow secondary and negligible. Both raise the moral importance of the vision very far above the mere presence of natives on a piece of immensely significant territory. And both visions belong fundamentally to the ethos of European mission civilisatrice – nineteenth-century, colonialist, racist even – built on notions about the inequality of men, races, and civilizations, an inequality allowing the most extreme forms of self-aggrandizing projections and the most extreme forms of punitive discipline toward the unfortunate natives whose existence paradoxically was denied (Said 1980: 19).*

Moreover, the approved history of colonialist nations such as Israel, the United States, Australia and South Africa started with what Said called a “blotting out from knowledge” of the native people or the making of them into “people without history”. In *The Question of Palestine* Said affirms:

*Between 1922 and 1947 the great issue witnessed by the world in Palestine was not, as a Palestinian would like to imagine, the struggle between natives and new colonists, but a struggle presented as being between Britain and the Zionists. The full irony of this remarkable epistemological achievement—and I use the philosophical term because there is no other one adequate to expressing the sheer blotting out from knowledge of almost a million natives – is enhanced when we remember that in 1948, at the moment that Israel declared itself a state, it legally owned a little more than 6 percent of the land of Palestine and its population of Jews consisted of a fraction of the total Palestinian population” (Said 1980: 23).*

It is obvious that once the native Palestinians are banished from collective memory, at least as a people of cultural heritage, the Zionist colonizer’s moral and intellectual right to conquest is claimed to be established without question. The perverted colonial perspective of the invaders considers the Arab existence in Palestine prior to the Zionist colonization as inconsequential. Such colonial ideology provides a pre-text for the extermination of all the native Arabs in Palestine because they are seen as a threat to the Zionist pioneers and the emerging Zionist state. The same colonial discourse overestimates the colonizers viewing them as carriers of Western civilization and at the same time it degrades the colonized Palestinians portraying them as agents of evil and barbarism.

In response to such a colonial discourse, both Palestinian and Native American poets have developed a counter poetics of resistance that aimed to subvert the imperialist hegemonic narrative and provide an insight into the brutal nature of colonization and its impact upon the colonized peoples. Contemporary poets, on both sides, explore issues such as identity, struggle and the loss of one’s homeland and its consequences on the collective consciousness of the colonized nations. While the native American poetry, in this context, is characterized by deep feelings of nostalgia for a pre-frontier past and a paradise that is lost forever, the anti-colonial Palestinian poetry is dominated by anger, revolution and a burning desire to restore what has been lost using all possible means of resistance and struggle. Unlike academic poets who appropriate the theories of Derrida and Lyotard “depoliticizing poetic discourse by way of brutally yanking it from the very history and materiality of its production” (Ahmad 1992: 32), Palestinian and native American poets engage poetry and politics. They wrote poems that challenge colonial hegemony, poems that have the potential for manipulating the masses as material forces and instruments of social change.

By writing poems of resistance or what Le Roi Jones calls “poems that shoot guns” (*Black Magic* 1969: 116), contemporary Palestinian poets are able to control the popular and national consciousness and urge the masses including Palestinian children in the refugee camps to take action against the colonizers. In this context, anti-colonial Palestinian poetry constitutes a counter-hegemonic dynamics of resistance that seeks to undermine the Zionist/Israeli narrative about Palestinian resistance activities particularly the Uprising/Intifada in the late 1990’s as a terrorist activity. Instead, the Palestinian poets have created a poetics of social change aiming to revolutionize the entire Palestinian people encouraging them to intensify their struggle against the colonizers. Using the poem as “a bullet” or “a stone” revolutionary Palestinian poets are able to change poetry into a material force in the battle for independence. Due to the bloody confrontations with the Israeli army on the borders of Gaza and the West Bank the Palestinian poets have written poems which seek to historicize the Palestinian popular uprisings locating them in their appropriate social and political context as popular/national movements of a colonized people dreaming of independence. Thus, the poetry of the first uprising (1987-1988) seeks to depict the unequal confrontations between the Palestinian refugees and the Zionist war machine on the frontiers of Gaza and the West Bank. On the borders of violence and fear that separate between the Palestinian refugee camps (the habitation of Arab “barbarians” and “terrorists”) and the modern Israeli state (the Promised Land of the European colonizers) thousands of Palestinian children have been slaughtered by the Israeli army.

Both the Palestinian and the Red Indian borders/frontiers have been historically subjected to imperialist/hegemonic expansion that aimed to marginalize the natives into refugee camps and reservations. Unlike the perverted colonial narrative that identifies the frontier as “a new field of opportunity, a gate of escape from the bondage of the past” (Turner 1962: 4) or as a location for “romance, mythology and adventure” (Spiller 1956: 15) the Palestinian and Red Indian frontiers have been associated with mass-murder and military aggression. Historically, borders/frontiers have been imposed by the colonizers to contain, control and crush the colonized as in the history of Indian and Palestinian removal and dispossession. For native American and Palestinian poets, the borderland/ the frontier that is created inside their native territories by the colonizers implies more than a political/geographic reality because it is related to their attitudes toward their history, homeland and identity. For instance, the land for the Palestinians is the site of oppression, colonization, displacement and relocation. In the uprising poetry, the native land, therefore, turns out to be the location of exile and revolution. This land-based struggle is integral to the Palestinian poetry about the uprising which is an attempt to resist the expansionist policy of the Zionist colonizers.

Like the Palestinian uprising poets, the native American poet, Joy Harjo is also concerned with the issue of the land. In “*Autobiography*”, she laments the fate of her own people “whose sacred land was stolen” (Harjo 1990: 14) by the European invaders. In spite of the differences between their histories, geographical locations and concepts of border/frontier, both Palestinian and native

American poets have been concerned with the issues of land and identity in their poetry. In their attempt to resist imperialistic forces that seek to remove them outside history, they developed a counter-hegemonic poetic mechanism urging their peoples to continue their struggle against representatives of colonialism and oppression. In Palestinian poetry, the dialectic of land and identity is given priority suggesting that identity emanates from the land and that to reclaim the land is to restore one's identity. In order to express the dialectic of land and identity the poets who wrote about the Palestinian uprising have glorified the Palestinian children who were killed on daily basis as they challenged the Israeli war machine by throwing stones at tanks and soldiers. The first Palestinian uprising is called 'the uprising of the stones' and the Palestinian poets used in their poems a new language of resistance which was called "the language of the stones". Integrated in the intersection of homeland, identity and struggle, "the language of the stones" is not a location of discursive resistance but it is a concrete/material struggle because language in the uprising poetry is dialectically associated with the land. In other words, "the language of the stones" that characterizes the uprising poetry is a crucial site of struggle aiming to restore the Palestinian occupied territory and establish a Palestinian independent state.

The conflict over territory is the major obstacle not only in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as the pro-Israeli critic, Edith Kurzweil argues (1992: 423), but also in other contexts. Historically, the native land of the colonized nations constitutes the basic target of the colonizers. Henri Lefebvre argues that colonial "capitalism has taken possession of the land and mobilized it to the point where this sector has become central" (Lefebvre 1991: 335). In Palestinian and native American poetry, there is a focus on the question of native land, the land which has been occupied, plundered, usurped and exploited under the Promised Land myth in Palestine and the Manifest Destiny myth in America. Due to the capitalist logic of colonialism or the colonialist logic of Zionism, the native American and Palestinian territories have been exploited and destroyed in a variety of ways. In Palestine, the indigenous people were forced to live in refugee camps inside their own native land after the occupation of their villages and the destruction of their fields. The Palestinian orange and olive fields have been systematically and exclusively destroyed since 1948 by the Zionist colonizers for the sake of building new settlements for strangers who came from alien destinations.

Like the Palestinian people, native American nations have historically suffered from territorial colonialism since the European conquest of their land. In America, the Indian Territory was occupied and the Indians, after being persecuted, were marginalized in the extreme West or in reservations for a long period of time. In "A Post-Colonial Tale", Joy Harjo refers to an Indian land that is "sprinkled with the bodies of my own relatives" (Harjo 1994: 19). Therefore, in native American and Palestinian poetry, land has been the location of both persecution and resistance of oppression. In Palestinian poetry, the uprising is a means of restoring the land and achieving the national dream of independence. In native American poetry, poets like Joy Harjo, Simon Ortiz and others, have explored themes of land, displacement, identity and resistance in order to reconstruct power relations in favor of the colonized and the displaced. Expressing the burden of exile in her own land, Harjo articulates aesthetically the feeling of a native American who is metamorphosed into a stranger in America. This feeling would turn into revolution and protest "of love turned into activism" (Harjo 1990: 24).

Since the European invasion of America, the simple and peaceful life of the native inhabitants of the land has turned into chaos and anarchy. When the first European colonizers reached the American shores, the life of the natives turned into a nightmare and they became strangers in their own land:

*They came from the East when they arrived,  
came the beginning of our misery  
the beginning of church dues,  
the beginning of strife with blow-guns,  
the beginning of strife by trampling on people,  
the beginning of debts enforced by false testimony,  
a beginning of vexation. (cited in Bierhorst 1974: 148).*

Like the Palestinian frontiers which have been invaded by waves of Zionist colonizers coming from alien lands, the Red Indian frontiers were subjected to similar aggressive invasions. Waves of European settlers driven out of old Europe for different reasons swept the Indian frontier violating its natural laws and disrupting its traditions. Like the Zionist invasion of Palestine, the European colonization of the Red Indian territories brought misery and pain to the native inhabitants of the land. Chronicling the history of the frontier and evoking the painful memories of the European invasion of America, Harjo says:

*waking from sleep  
remember dreams of my other world  
as an antlered female deer  
on grass and leaves I'd graze  
from the mountainside I'd graze  
but I, Clouding Woman  
my man, Howling White  
and now a Shyela, a Cheyenne, draws me near  
and speaks a name no one can hear  
"Deer Eye"*

*"Deer Eye"*

*twice he said  
now I know Clouding Woman is dead  
now  
you've used  
our home as your junkheap  
taken our memories  
taken our eyes (Harjo 1979: 149).*

On the frontier, native American women like Palestinian women in the refugee camps, were targets for the attacks and exploitation of the colonizers. From the beginning, the American frontier movement was associated with violence, bloodshed and anarchy. Mark Gerzon draws an analogy between violence and frontier wars:

*for generations, we lived with violence and bloodshed. For generations we pushed the Indians farther and farther west. And for generations we portrayed the triumph of white over red as a validation of our national manhood (Gerzon 1982: 19).*

On the frontier, reckless frontiersmen ignored the social laws and moral ethics of the Indians as they moved from East to West bringing ruin and damage to the native people and their land. Like the Zionist colonizers who demolished thousands of houses and removed thousands of acres planted with olive and orange trees slaughtering Palestinian women and children, the European colonizers mercilessly massacred native families killing their animals and eliminating their forests as they rushed along the Indian frontier in successive waves:

*The whole world is coming,  
a nation is coming, a nation is coming,  
the Eagle has brought the message to the tribe,  
the father says so, the father says so  
over the whole earth they are coming  
the crow has brought the message to the tribe  
the father says so, the father says so (cited in Thornton 1987: 142).*

In an angry tone, Carol Lee Sanchez evokes the frontier memory condemning the American cultural mythology such as the Manifest Destiny myth, employed to justify the colonization of the Indian territories. Sanchez in *"Conversations"* criticized the frontier mentality of the rugged European colonizers who brought havoc to the Indian land denouncing old Europe: "Father Europe / I divorce you / from this tierra indigena". Sanchez, in the same poem expresses her nostalgia for her lost native land which was raped and plundered by the European colonizers:

*to me  
this land filled with  
tradition  
long before your  
displaced dropouts  
began the rape and plunder  
of what was already ordered  
this sacred altar  
still holds the bones  
of who I was  
those roots of me that  
ache for knowledge of  
who I might have been  
before your Manifest Destiny  
robbed my flesh  
and diluted my blood (Sanchez 1978: 242).*

In response to the frontier experience which is recalled in Sanchez's poem, the poet affirms her identity as a native American emphasizing that America is an Indian land:

*Father Europe:  
I dispossess you! Take back my birthright  
with the force of  
my being  
this America  
belongs to  
my people (Sanchez 1978: 243)*

Recalling the frontier experience in native American poetry is often associated with feelings of nostalgia for a pre-frontier paradise, a Utopian homeland which exists only in the imagination of the native American poet. For example, Ray Young Bear reveals nostalgia for an Indian past, prior to the European conquest:

*you know we'd like to be there  
standing beside our grandfathers  
being ourselves  
without the frailty  
and insignificance of the worlds  
we suffer and balance (Young Bear 1980: 118).*

The same feeling is expressed by Simon Ortiz who longs for a pre-frontier paradise free from the ecological pollution caused by the European invaders:

*I just want to cross the next hill  
through that clump of trees  
and come out the other side  
and see a clean river,  
the whole earth new  
and hear the noise it makes  
at birth (Ortiz 1976: 62).*

As indicated above, the native American poet dreams of a pre-frontier past because of his inability to live in a hostile American environment. For Indians, born and raised in reservations, the American society becomes a place of dislocation and exile:

*the lights,  
the cars,  
the deadened glares  
tear my heart  
and close my mind  
I see me walking in sleep  
down streets, down streets gray with cement  
and glaring glass and oily wind,  
armed with a pint of wine  
I cheated my children to buy  
I am lonely for hills  
I am lonely for myself (Ortiz 1976: 37-38).*

Ortiz criticizes aspects of European civilization brought to America, his native land, by the invaders – “streets gray with cement / glaring glass and oil wind” lamenting the aggressive attempts of the colonizers to destroy ecology and nature and bring damage to the “botanic, animal and human worlds” (Schein 1992: 231). In this context, Ortiz compares the materialistic values of the colonizers with the moral ethics of the Indian ancestors. According to him, the basic problem that encounters the modern world is America’s isolation from Mother Earth and fellow human beings. Ortiz also attacks the American urge for domination which is rooted in the American frontier mentality and could be traced to the colonial “capitalism’s quest for profit” (Ortiz 1992: 29).

This perverted frontier ethics, in Ortiz’s view, would lead to the destruction of America and the world: “The American political-economic system was mainly interested in control and exploitation and it didn’t matter how it was achieved” (Ortiz 1992: 31). Observing the exploitation and destruction of Indian territories for a long time by American capitalists just to achieve profit, Ortiz longs for a pre-colonial past where his indigenous people lived in harmony with nature. On this basis, Ortiz’s poetry, according to Gregg Graber, serves “to provide context as well understanding of the racism that exists against Indians, the continued pressure by corporate America to exploit the remaining Indian lands, and the role that many Indian cultures could fill in saving the people and the land if allowed” (Graber 2000: 19). In *The Indians Won*, Ortiz overcomes his feelings of nostalgia for a lost past and discusses the plight of his people who were isolated in reservations “jail-houses” for a long period of time and when they were released they found themselves in “a bigger jail” which is the modern American society (Ortiz 1981: 303).

Like Ortiz, Joy Harjo articulates poetically the alienation of the native American in the modern American society. For her, the native American survives as an alien in the modern American metropolis but one truly lives within memories of the land and the ancestors. In *Secrets from the Center of the World*, Harjo acknowledges the existence of a dominating Anglo American civilization – telephone/electricity poles, power plant waste and modern highways – which intensifies the feeling of nostalgia for a Red Indian heritage echoing along the American city and “lying under the earth”. Observing that the spirit of the ancestors is still haunting the American territory, Harjo affirms that “the landscape forms the mind” and “stories are our wealth” (Harjo 1989: 24). Only through recalling ancestral stories and memories of a pre-colonial past the native American poet is able to survive in a hostile world. Living within memories of the native land, Harjo is not attracted to a civilization which is associated with modern American cities like New

York because for her “my house is the red earth; it could be the center of the world” (Harjo 1989: 2). Juxtaposing her memories of a pre-colonial past against modern life in the American society where her folks live as strangers, Harjo underlines the painful attempt of the native American to survive in a hostile Anglo-American world by escaping into the racial memory of the past. In “*Waking-Up Thoughts*”, Harjo visualizes an image of a pre-frontier America lost at the frontier. Harjo’s vision engages a union between the poet and “the night”, “the forest”, “the sun” and the luxury of a pre-colonial paradise:

*I breathe as the night breathes  
I live as the forest life lives  
the soft leaves and wet grass  
are my protectors  
behind me in the sleep dead world  
is Pipe woman, my mother time?  
and Tall Man, my father earth  
and Deer Eye, my sister dawn  
the village sleepers stand beside my dream  
giving comfort through the silent trials  
of early rising suns  
the sleeping ones are my friends  
my heart’s song is to the sleeping ones (Harjo 1979: 145).*

In spite of her pre-frontier escapist poetry, Joy Harjo, like Simon Ortiz, is a native American poet who basically considers herself as part and parcel of a community of poetic voices standing as representatives of groups and minorities which are excluded from the mainstream literary canon in America. In an interview with Stephanie Smith, she points out:

*I have been especially involved in the struggles of my Indian peoples to maintain a place and culture in this precarious age. My poetry has everything to do with this. I came into writing at a poignant historical moment. I was lucky to be a part of a major multicultural movement with other writers (Smith 1993: 24).*

Like Harjo, the native American poet, Duane BigEagle, writes lyrics, characterized by feelings of nostalgia for a pre-colonial Indian country in her attempt to escape from a mechanized and commercialized civilization. Her poem “*My Father’s Country*” recreates an image of a pre-frontier America which embodies the mythic desire of the native poet to restore a Utopian world that is lost forever:

*father, let us walk again  
as our grandfathers did  
if need be we will make new bodies of this earth  
eat only memories  
drink only liquid split in our dreams  
take shelter  
in our love  
in the vastness of this land  
we need only the songs its spirits teach us  
and to sing!  
always to sing (BigEagle 1979: 144).*

The romantic longing and nostalgia for the other America, lost at the frontier, which dominates the poetry of Harjo, Ortiz and other native American poets disappears in the poetry of Linda Hogan, Wendy Rose and Carter Revard. In Hogan’s “*Heritage*”, the pre-frontier past with its luxuries and myths is approached as a part of an Indian history that dies and can never be restored or revived. The poet acknowledges that in the post-frontier era, the Indians suffered from exile, persecution and displacement:

*and grandmother, blue-eyed woman  
told me how our tribe has always followed a stick  
that pointed west  
that pointed east  
from my family I have learnt the secrets  
of never having home (Hogan 1984: 165).*

In Wendy Rose’s poem “*To Some Few Hopi Ancestors*”, the poet who suffers from the dramatic consequences of living in a post-frontier America, criticizes her ancestors and their Indian heritage which they failed to protect from colonial plundering and hegemony:

*your songs have changed  
they have  
become thin willow whispers  
that take us by the ankle  
and tangle*

*us up with the red mesa stone*

you have engraved yourself (Rose 1979: 381)

In the same poem Rose expresses her anger toward the ancestors revealing a deep identity crisis experienced by native American poets who are torn between the dreams of a Utopian past that is lost forever and the nightmares of a present dominated by the same imperialistic forces that massacred their grandfathers and sought to dehumanize the remnants of the Indian nation once more again.

Unlike Wendy Rose who puts the blame on the ancestors in her above-cited poem, Carter Revard denounces the European colonizers who are responsible for the misery of his own people and the destruction of nature and environment in the Indian territory on the frontier. In “*Discovery of the New World*”, the poet uses science fiction discourse as he describes the brutal behavior of the European invaders toward the Red Indians on the frontier. Revard seeks to affirm the atrocities committed by the colonizers and their insistence on their cultural and social superiority over the other races: “The creatures that we met this morning / marveled at our green skins and scarlet eyes / they lack antennae”. The poem continues in a manner which aims to draw the attention of the reader to the greedy nature of the European conquest of America by blending science fiction discourse with Manifest Destiny mythology:

*It is our destiny to asterize this planet,  
and they will not be asterized,  
so they must be wiped out.  
we need their space and nitrogen  
which they do not know how to use (Revard 1980: 44).*

The same aggressive frontier mentality which is responsible for the annihilation of the Red Indians is echoed in the imperialistic spirit which encourages the European Zionists to maintain their genocide of the Palestinian people<sup>viii</sup>. Like the imperialist colonial narrative which depicts the Red Indians as savages in order to justify their genocide, contemporary Zionist discourse portrays the Palestinians as terrorists who must be eradicated at any cost. The vicious attempts of the American culture machine to view Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation forces as terrorism seeks to justify the eradication of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli war machine. In the face of the Israeli troops, armed with the most sophisticated military arsenal in the Middle East, the Palestinian children in the refugee camps defend themselves with stones. Describing one day of the siege of the Palestinian refugee camp in Jenin (October 2002) during the second uprising (2000), Annie Higgins states:

*The Israeli soldiers begin by prowling the streets at half past seven when students from kindergarten through university are making their way to school. They summon up all their courage to secrete themselves in heavily fortified tanks, armed with shells and dum... dum bullets to defend against the danger of unarmed children. Who is hunting whom? The children and young adults are heading toward school. The hunters head toward the children. They find them in the streets, in the school yard, on the bus, and in their classrooms. The tanks' rumble is audible from a distance and is terrifying, but the children walk at a leisurely pace, having learnt to gauge the tank's distance by the sound. The tanks emit a thick, acrid smoke that cloaks them from full visibility. These are large, clumsy machines, not terribly fast, but terribly forceful. They make the rounds of Jenin's many schools, trying to enforce a prohibition on school attendance. Children, teachers, and staff continue to make a difference. Since 1 September, school has been in session for a maximum of fourteen days. When they shoot at the children in school, class is interrupted. This is not new, but it is still alarming. Here is today's harvest of students caught by the brave hunters in their tanks (Higgins 2002: 1).*

Salim Tamari and Remma Hammami also observed the dramatic consequences of the escalation of violence during the second Palestinian uprising:

*The young men armed with stones facing the mightiest army in the Middle East, the grieving mothers, the nationalist symbols unfurled at martyrs' funerals seemed like a restaging of the same events twelve years earlier. Even the parades of the masked youth carrying guns recall the final days of the first uprising. This time, however, the episodes were more condensed, the killings more brutal, the reactions swifter, the media coverage more intense. Within a matter of weeks, the language of the Uprising had become the idiom of everyday life (Tamari and Hammami 2001:1).*

Apparently, the Palestinian uprisings are the direct result of the Israeli occupation and policies of violence and aggression that include demolition of houses and destruction of olive fields. On this basis the entire world sees the Palestinian Uprising as a minimum form of resistance against the colonizers except for the American mainstream media which views the Uprising as part of global terrorism. Jonathan Schanzer argues that the Palestinian Uprisings against the British occupation in the 1930's and their counterparts in 1988 and 2000 have brought havoc to the Palestinian society including the mass-murder of children and the rise of radical organizations and terrorism as well as what he calls “the intra-Palestinian violence” (Schanzer 2002: 5). In the same context, Kenneth Stein points out that all the Palestinian Uprisings proved that “the Palestinian Arabs could not be trusted as equals in the future administration of Palestine or portions of it. Stein continues:

*Over the last several years, Palestinian Arabs engaged in civil disobedience and political violence in different parts of the holy land. A political stalemate was impending, while Jewish presence continued to envelop*

*Palestinians. Religiously, the shared disillusionment among many Palestinian Muslims infused an Islamic component into the ardor. The religious philosophy that was posited included a pronounced rejection of the West, the adoption of a militant course of political action through armed struggle, and a keen desire to expel the influence and presence of the great power and the Jewish invaders (Stein 1991: 3).*

### **Violence Breeds Violence: Resistance in Palestinian Poetry**

Definitely, the interference of militant religious organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the second Palestinian Uprising and their terrorist operations against the innocent citizens of Israel is a stigma in the Palestinian history of resistance. However, the militarization of the second Uprising which erupted in 2000 is partly the result of the hypocritical and double-standard policies adopted by successive American governments toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By advocating the Zionist/Israeli narrative about the conflict, the American policy makers have turned deaf ears to the atrocities committed on daily basis against the Palestinian stone-throwing children by the Israeli war machine. According to the American version of the conflict, the Palestinian, the Zionist army is authorized to slaughter the Palestinian refugees who constitute a nation of terrorists. While the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was condemned by American politicians as an imperialist aggression that should be confronted in order to achieve justice in a world dominated by a unilateral superpower, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories since 1948 has been recently acknowledged as part of the counter-terrorism campaign integral to the new American policy in the Middle East. The Israeli brutalities against the refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank are tolerated in America and are viewed as part of the self-defensive pre-emptive war against terrorism while Palestinian resistance is viewed as acts of terrorism<sup>ix</sup>.

Obliterating the lines between legitimate resistance against the colonizers and global terrorism, the Zionist and American narrative of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict seeks to vilify and demonize the image of the Palestinian people. The hegemonic colonial attempt of the Zionist culture machine to demonize the colonized victims in the refugee camps and impose the image of terrorism on Palestinian resistance is similar to prior attempts in the history of imperialist countries against colonized people particularly the Red Indians and the Africans. The aroma of respect associated with the Israeli military activities against the refugee camps, as depicted in American media, is part of the colonial/hegemonic attempt to distort history by viewing the resistance of the colonized as aberrant violence and presenting the brutalities of the colonizer as anti-terrorism activities.

According to the American narrative of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Israeli soldiers who kill women and children on daily basis are portrayed as pioneers protecting the frontiers that separate between a representative of Western civilization, the Israeli government and the Palestinian barbarians. The same colonial narrative views the Palestinian Uprising fighters who struggle for independence as Red Indian savages representing eminent danger to the Zionist project of colonization. In this context, the American colonial narrative of the Uprising reinforces the racist Israeli policy that aims to uproot the Palestinian savages and isolate them in reservations “refugee camps” surrounded by Zionist settlements protected by an occupying force armed with the most advanced US war technology.

In response to the hegemonic discourse advocated by the Zionist colonizers<sup>x</sup> and their American allies, the Palestinian and Arab poets who have dealt with the first Palestinian Uprising “the Uprising of the Stones”, developed a poetics to enhance the resistance culture among the Palestinian people. In their poetry they seek to subvert the Zionist narrative of the Uprising. They also attempt to undermine the policy of submission and indifference advocated by official Arab governments toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In order to subvert the Zionist/colonial discourse about the Uprising, the poets, examined in the study, have exploited the power of words to present their own narrative. Nevertheless, when they attempted to render the Uprising into poetry they felt that words could not express the greatness of the Palestinian children confronting the horrible Israeli army just with stones in their hands. Thus, the poets seek to touch the emotional depth of the readers by exploring the heroic acts of unarmed children facing an aggressive war machine.

The resistance activity of the Palestinian children 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. The poetry that chronicles the first Palestinian Uprising constitutes part of the attempt to resist “the culture of tyranny” advocated by the Zionist colonizers and the culture of submission and hypocrisy adopted by Arab governments. In an interview with Afif Ismail, the Palestinian poet, Mureed 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 by Ismail 2003: 5).

The Palestinian Uprising poetry challenges “the culture of tyranny” advocated by the colonizers and their allies and laments the absence of a unified attitude against the Zionist policy that seeks to eliminate the Palestinians. Using Palestinian cultural symbols such as the Kufiyya “traditional head dress” and the olive tree and linking the Uprising of the stones with prior Uprisings, the poets aim to record the history of that significant event emphasizing its profound ramifications on the entire world. In order to historicize the first Uprising, the poets created a poetics of anger not a poetics of nostalgia because the latter, according to Al-Barghouthi “is an indication of romantic impotence” which failed to confront colonial aggression and hegemony”. Al-Barghouthi explains: “Your enemy imposed his will on you seeking to marginalize you, to decenter you and remove you out of your homeland, your birthplace. Your enemy aims

to negate your relationship with your land in terms of place and time. Consequently, you should not surrender expressing your sadness and woes at your loss but you should be angry. It is natural to be angry since your anger is the threshold to action whereas nostalgia is a signifier of romantic impotence” (cited by Ismail 2003: 5).

In the first Uprising which erupted in December 1988, the suppressed anger of the Palestinian people in the refugee camps of Gaza and the West Bank is expressed through the language of the stones. In the Uprising poetry, the stone, like the olive tree and the Palestinian Kufiyya, is used as a symbol of the struggle of an entire nation to restore a homeland, or a part of it, that was lost due to colonial hegemony and Arab defeats. In his book *The Uprising of the Stones*, Abdul-Aziz Al-Makaleh observes that “during the primitive ages, human beings used stones to defend themselves against wild animals. In our modern era, the Palestinian children used stones to defend themselves against the wild animals of the twentieth century, the barbaric Zionist soldiers” (Al-Makaleh 1992: 21). Being deprived of any kind of military support, the Palestinian children, living in the refugee camps inside the occupied territories, had nothing to use against the Israeli war machine except the stones of their own land. Expressing his pride of the resistance activities carried out by the Palestinian children, Hatem Al-Sakr says: “A moon walking on earth/ the youngsters of our homeland/ standing like swords/ making us hear another language” (Al-Sakr 1989:27). Obviously, the new language in Al-Sakr’s poem is the language of the stones associated with a change in the politics of the Palestinian resistance during the first Uprising. In other words, the use of the stones against the military power of the Israeli army subverts the colonial narrative about the conflict and draws the attention of the whole world to the horrible reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The entire world becomes aware of the truth that the Israelis are not victims of Palestinian violence as constantly viewed by the Zionist culture machine but, in fact, they are murderers of innocent Palestinian children.

Emphasizing the political significance of the first Palestinian Uprising at this crucial moment in the Palestinian history of struggle, Al-Sakr hails the stone-throwing children as heroes. He implores them to “draw a rising moon on our wasteland/ A banner of victory/ Be our coming thunder/ A messenger of rain”. The use of wasteland images in addition to the resurrection and fertility allusions embedded in the “coming thunder” and “rain” expose the deplorable conditions of the Arab World in the early 1990s after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and emphasize the dire need of a savior to guide the Arabs to the way of salvation and redemption. Since there is no savior or Christ-figure among the Arab rulers who, without exception, have turned into puppets in the hands of Israel and America, “the game today is in the hands of a Palestinian child who says “no/ who raises the banners of our glory/ the glory of the stone” (Al-Sakr 1989: 28).

Apparently, the Palestinian poet, mentioned above, compares the high spirit and vitality of the armless Palestinian children confronting a brutal military machine with the rulers of Arab countries whose castrated and impotent armies have given the Arab peoples nothing but recurrent defeats: “In the past, the game was in the hands of decadent tribes/ speaking a language full of lies/ depending on horses which have fallen down/ in the darkness of the prairie of fear”. Both the Arab rulers and their armies should be ashamed of themselves because they have left the Palestinian children alone to face the savage Zionist regime in the occupied territories. The Arab rulers according to the poem, “are doing nothing except talking” and “today they seek the help of a Palestinian child carrying some stones”, however, they did not take the moral lesson because later on, “they go back to sleep asking heaven for help”.

One of the Palestinian children fighting the Zionist soldiers, on behalf of the sleeping Arab rulers, is immortalized in Saadi Yousef’s poem “Yahya”. The famous Iraqi poet portrays “Yahya”, a Palestinian refugee child who is killed during the Uprising against the Israeli occupied forces, as a national hero. In the poem, Yahya uses his stones to face the Israeli tanks the same way a professional soldier uses his machine gun: “The banners of Yahya/ His clothes which are full of bullets’ holes/ Yahya in the refugee camp/ is collecting stones to shoot them/ in the face of fire” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 32). In the third stanza of the poem, Yahya becomes a symbol of the Palestinian struggle and revolution: “Yahya walks in the streets/ his armor is a speckled Palestinian Kufiyya/ my son - you are a king raising his green banners/ Palestine is your kingdom/ Take whatever you like from Palestine, take all the streets of Palestine/ Take the land of God – take us if you wish” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 34). The references to the child’s clothes “which are full of bullets’ holes” is a signifier of the brutality of the Israeli army. However, the allusions to the Palestinian Kufiyya, a famous Palestinian symbol since the 1930’s and “the green banners” of Yahya underline the continuity of Palestinian struggle regardless of Arab indifference toward the Palestinian issue. Yahya’s olive branch, a Palestinian icon integral to the Palestinian dream that seeks to restore their land or part of it affirms the insistence of the Palestinians to have a homeland of their own in spite of the American and Western alliance with Israel.

The Uprising erupted partly because of the American double policy toward the Palestinian issue which reached a zenith after the September 11<sup>th</sup> events. Akbar Ahmed points out that “when America’s war on terrorism unfolded after the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Palestinians were pushed against the wall and the spiral of killing and violence increased dramatically” (Ahmed 2001: 11) in the West Bank and Gaza. Illuminating the Western double policy toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Asma Barlas argues that in Western perspective “the Jewish struggle that resulted in Israel’s existence is represented almost universally as a nationalist struggle even though the Jewish claim to Palestine is theological not political in nature in as much as it arises in a covenant with God”. However, “the Palestinians’ struggle for their own state is represented almost universally as a holy war (a kind of terrorism) rather than as a nationalist and anti-colonial struggle even though it arises in a political claim to land and is not based upon arguments about

religious rights” (Barlas 2003: 53). Dealing with the Palestinian Uprising as a kind of terrorism, the American culture machine, according to Charles Smith, ignored the fact that “the Jewish Hagana, Irgum and Stern gangs [not the Palestinians] were those who began the practice of bombing gathering places and crowded Arab areas in order to terrorize the Arab community” (Smith 1992: 140). To the Jews, Smith continues, the members of these groups were not considered as terrorists but they were glorified as “patriots whose exploits enabled the founding of Israel and Menachem Begin”, the Stern gang’s leader became a prime minister of the Jewish state during the 1970’s.

In order to undermine the colonial discourse which depicts Palestinian resistance as terrorism, the Uprising poets present the Palestinian resistance through the image of Palestinian children carrying stones and confronting the most powerful military machine in the Middle East. In “*The Song of the Stones*”, Suleiman Al-Eissa describes a confrontation between a group of Palestinian children armed only with stones and an Israeli tank. The Palestinian poet addresses the Israeli officer on the board of the tank: “Why are you so scared sir? / Are you afraid of the Palestinian children? / Are you afraid of children living in the tents of the refugee camps / since you usurped their food and their land? / Are you still scared of little children stoning your tank?” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 40). Then, the poet refers to the Palestinian palm tree which is a symbol of life and survival affirming that the Palestinian people like the palm trees, are deeply rooted in their homeland. In spite of decades of oppression and brutal massacres, the Palestinian people have never been isolated from their land or from their olive orchards and palm trees:

*Our palm tree is still growing  
it gives us its dates  
our children live under its shades  
our ancestors died under its shades (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 40).*

Afterwards, Al-Eissa addresses the Israeli officer on the board of the tank using a sarcastic tone: “Our children have nothing except their stones / but when an assassin like you showers their fragile bodies / with the bullets of death / They suddenly turn into an earthquake / driving you to madness / why are you so scared of them sir? / They only carry stones”. In the preceding lines, the courage of the Palestinian children who defend themselves with stones is juxtaposed to the cowardice of the Israeli officer armed with a tank. The Israeli officer is scared of the armless children because he is aware of the fact that he is a colonizer usurping Palestinian territory. Being aware of their right to defend their dignity and their occupied homeland, the Palestinian children, unlike the cowardly Israeli officer, are ready to die for their just cause. They turn the Uprising into an earthquake which horrifies the colonizer in spite of the power of his military machine. As lovers of the land, the Palestinian children, engaged in the revolutionary Uprising against the Israelis were able to give birth to a new Arab Renaissance: “They said the Arab World is dead / and it will never come back to life / They said the Arab World has been Americanized / but a new spirit is coming back throughout our children / Throughout the remains of the stone song / I am telling all the poets: this is the era of the stone epic” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 41).

The stone, as a symbol of struggle, also pervades one of Mamdouh Odwan’s poems, written in response to the first Uprising which is associated with the revolution of the Palestinians against an occupation that has lasted for more than fifty years. In “*The Stone*”, the Palestinian poet, Mamdouh Odwan celebrates the Uprising which breaks the silence of a world that has turned its back on the Palestinian plight and suffering. Odwan reveals that for years, the Palestinians have been waiting for a savior to put an end to their misery but all their efforts to terminate their tragedy were futile. They have been engaged in political and military struggle in addition to the diplomacy of the Oslo accords for the sake of restoring a part of their usurped homeland.

Thus, in “*The Stone*”, The Palestinians under occupation became tired of waiting: “The shades in the middle of the summer die / as a result of waiting and boredom / the swords in the battlefield die out of waiting and boredom”. Nevertheless, the “stones Uprising” ushers in a new era: “This is the time of the stone / the water in the rivers turns into a stone / If you want to live in dignity be a stone / carry a stone / throw a stone in the face of the enemy” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 42).

In Odwan’s poem, the stone is used to connote different meanings. It is not only a symbol of the Palestinian struggle and revolution against an oppressive regime but it is also used to signify the current Arab situation that characterizes the Arab-Israeli relationship just before the breaking up of the Uprising. For instance, when the poet refers to what he calls “the stony time”, he indicates the state of political stagnation and military immobility which characterizes the Palestinian-Israeli conflict prior to the first Uprising. Speaking of the shameful condition of sterility and impotence dominating the Arab World which partly leads to the popular Uprising in Palestine in 1988, the poet uses the images of “dying trees”, “sterile wind” and “frozen rain” as wasteland symbols to signify a state of futility and hopelessness: “In winter, the rain is frozen / and the wind is ashamed of itself / as the winter season always comes without rain / the wind is a blade cutting the trees / shattering the trunks of the dying palms” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 43).

This condition of sterility and moral stagnation<sup>xi</sup> comes to an end with the emergence of the stone as a weapon of resistance: “The leaves of the trees turn into stones”, says the poet. Thus, the stone becomes a central symbol of revolution and struggle: “A stone secretly carrying its fire / whispering its secrets to a boy / full of anger and bitterness / If there is an enemy / there is always a stone / and the rivers of courage flow with stones / and stones pour down like showers of rain” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 45). By the end of the poem, Odwan advises the Arab nation to “learn the lesson given to us by a Palestinian boy / in the era of the stone”. He equally urges the Palestinian people living as refugees in their own land to intensify their struggle against the enemy because they have

nothing to lose: “We have nothing to lose / be a stone / we have been dehumanized / be a stone / We are not afraid of death anymore / be a stone / They have taken our homeland / be a stone / If you have no weapon carry a stone / scream, scream and your / voice becomes a stone / there is no more fear / no more relieving tears / as we see a crying boy turning into a stone” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 46).

The stone as a complex and subtle symbol, signifying a variety of meanings and ideas, is also used by Kazem Al-Sammawi in his poem “*Stones, Stones*”. In this poem, Al-Sammawi not only criticizes Zionist invaders but also attacks the Arab rulers for their submissive policy toward the Palestinian cause. The poet demonstrates that Arab rulers who have betrayed the Palestinian people have nothing to give to the Palestinians simply because they represent worn-out governments and castrated regimes that take orders from both the White House and the Israeli Parliament. Therefore, the stone-throwing children in Al-Sammawi’s poem represent a threat not only to the Israeli colonizers but also to fossilized Arab rulers who are afraid of the revolutionary spirit triggered by the Uprising: “A stone for a stony age / A stone for the Israeli assassin / A stone for a stony throne / A stone for the stony rulers / A stone for every Arab summit / and when they come to the summit / the Arab rulers turn into stones / A stone for those who / break their promises / A stone for the man with the Arabian cloak / A stone for the traitors / A stone for the stony regimes / A stone for the stony League / A stone for a stony conscience / A stone for a stony honor” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 181).

The word “stone” is aesthetically articulated in the text of the poem at different levels to connote a multiplicity of meanings. On one level, it refers to the state of moral bankruptcy in the Arab World and the indifference of Arab rulers toward the Palestinian tragedy: “A stone for a stony age / A stone for the man with the Arabian cloak”. On another level, the word “stone” signifies a worn-out Arab political system that lives outside history and time: “A stone for a stony throne”. It is also used as a means to attack the impotent policies of the Arab League and poke fun at the Arab rulers who turn literally into stones during Arab summits. The poet indicates that the spark of the Uprising of the stones should be extended to include every part of the Arab World. On this basis, the poet aims to revolutionize the masses in every Arab country in order to urge them to eliminate all the puppet rulers who have betrayed their people after selling their honor and conscience to achieve personal interests. The poem, as a whole, urges the Arab people to take the Palestinian children engaged in the Uprising, as an example of revolutionary struggle that must be extended to include every Arab country. Al-Sammawi also calls for the elimination of all Arab regimes that have tyrannized their people and the puppet rulers who betrayed the Palestinian cause and who served the interests of imperialistic countries. The poet also calls for the obliteration of all organizations and institutions that have failed to play a vital role in supporting the Palestinian struggle, particularly the Arab League: “A stone for the stony League”.

Like Al-Sammawi, Ahmad Dahbour uses the stone motif as a metaphor of Palestinian struggle and revolution. In “*The Stone of Our Homeland*”, Dahbour sarcastically compares the functional and revolutionary activities of the Uprising with the sterility and impotence of all Arab summits which have been transformed into ceremonies where Arab rulers enjoy entertainment and physical relaxation. During Arab summits held specially for supporting the Palestinian people all the rulers of the Arab countries are accustomed to be involved in social formalities and exchanging kisses and greetings, therefore, they do not usually have time to discuss the Palestinian / Israeli conflict or the fate of the Palestinian refugees: “When they come to the party / We are kicked out of the door / The party is on the honor of the Palestinian people / but they are not allowed to participate in its rituals” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 110). Inevitably the breaking up of the Palestinian Uprising puts an end to “the diplomatic nonsense” of the Arab summits: “This is the stone season/ The stone is flying in the horizon/ It is shining in the day light / Oh stones of our land/ Come, come like torrents of rain” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 115).

Like other Uprising poets, Dahbour utilizes the stone as a symbol of salvation heralding the beginning of a new era of liberation and independence. According to the poet, the revolution of the stones (the first Uprising) will inevitably bring resurrection to the wasteland of the Arab World. The blood of “the children carrying stones” will map out the way of salvation for the Palestinian people who do not need the empty rhetoric of Arab summits or Arab political propaganda anymore. Like Dahbour, Shawki Abdul-Amir glorifies the Uprising fighters who challenge the Israeli military machine and insist on their right to exist as a free nation. In Abdul-Amir’s Uprising poetry, the Palestinian stone becomes an emblem of the Palestinian historical struggle against the forces of evil and occupation: “We immortalize the history of our struggle in the past/ by writing it on the leaves of our trees/ our future is immortalized as it is written on the Palestinian stones/ If the Zionist invaders know/ how to occupy our land and play with history/ our children know how to occupy history and play with stones” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 148).

The significant role played by the Palestinian Uprising in contemporary Arab and Palestinian history and literature is also emphasized in the poetry of Ahmad Al-Hardello who addresses the Israeli policy-makers saying: “your armed soldiers who come to transform Arab land into an Israeli plantation/ extending from the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic ocean/ are scared of a child carrying a stone”. Al-Hardello also uses the word “stone” in different contexts to emphasize the relentless and persistent intentions of Palestinians to continue their struggle and revolution against a brutal enemy: “Our children will keep shooting you with deadly stones/ They will draw on the blackboards of our schools a country made of stones/ they will write in their notebooks about a nation of stones/ they will play in the alleys of Jerusalem with Palestinian stones/ when the universe falls into slumber/ they move around carrying their stones/ For us the whole world is nothing except a child throwing a stone” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 185). The repetition of the word

“stone”, in the preceding lines, enhances the revolutionary message of the poem which reaches a climax when the Palestinian children are seen playing with stones in the streets and alleys of Jerusalem, the occupied capital of the Palestinian state.

In “*My Head, the Bullet and the Stone*”, Faisal Khalil extensively uses the word “stone” to reveal his pride and admiration of the Palestinian children resisting a savage enemy armed with a sophisticated military arsenal just by using stones. Like other Uprising poems he uses “the Palestinian stone” in a variety of contexts to signify a complex pattern of themes and motifs: “The stone is everything and everything is a stone/ the stone is a minaret/ throw a stone and our land will burst into flames/ throw a stone and our motherland will embrace her sons/ and the rivers of courage will flow” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 201). As in other Uprising poems, the stone, a symbol of the first Palestinian Uprising, indicates the continuity of revolution and the condition of social solidarity among Palestinians living in refugee camps and Diaspora. In Khalil’s poem, everything is dedicated to the Palestinian Uprising (the Uprising of the stones): “Heaps of weapons, ammunition fields and battlefields have become stones/ the thunder of the stones/ I know nothing except stones” (Al-Makaleh 1992: 204). Even the people themselves are symbolically metamorphosed into stones, into weapons resisting the invaders: “My children are stones/ my doors and the turns of our alley become stones”. The poet continues: “I have already replaced the face of my beloved with the face of a stone/ My emotions to her have turned into a stone/ Even the palm trees and the corn fields have become stones/ The brown skinned child is transformed into a stone/ the virgin girl has become a stone/ I would like to kiss all the stones/ There is no time for deception/ an angry bullet lying between me and my head/ my head, the bullet and the stone” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 205).

Because of its strategic and vital role as a symbol of struggle during the first Palestinian Uprising, the stone motif is overloaded with a multiplicity of connotations and allusions in the Uprising poetry. The stone image is also used extensively as a complex symbol carrying oppositional implications. From a semantic perspective, this is the first time in the history of Arabic language that the word “stone” is given all these meanings. Obviously, the Palestinian Uprising has radically changed many things including the meaning of words. In this context, Renato Rosaldo has observed in “*Politics, Patriarchs and Laughter*” the strong relationship between struggle and creativity (Rosaldo 1987: 67). Due to the Palestinian heroic struggle during the Uprising, Arab and Palestinian poets were inspired to create new poetic images and use language in a highly creative manner. In the same context, the native American poet, Joy Harjo, illustrates the importance of creative and revolutionary poetry for marginalized nations such as the Palestinians and the native American minority. Harjo addresses all oppressed nations urging them to write poetry and render their struggle into words: “Speak, speak, your silence will not protect you” (Coltelli 1990: 58). On this basis, the Uprising poetry not only becomes an instrument of revolution and socio-political change but also “a public act” (Wong 1979: 5) challenging the hegemonic and imperialistic discourse of the colonizers.

Indicating that the stone is more powerful than the bullet, Bandar Abdul-Hamid says: “A bullet collides with a stone/ The bullet changes its direction/ and the stone falls apart/ turning into pieces of sand blinding the eyes of the invaders”. Then the poet refers to the brutality and cowardice of the Zionist soldiers who are not ashamed of fighting Palestinian children defending themselves with stones: “when they hear that his elder brother teaches him how to throw stones/ the enemy patrol-wagons siege the house/ The enemy patrol officers set an ambush to trap and arrest a child/ who has been fed on the milk of the revolution/ when he was taken to an Israeli prison/ the child laughs and mocks his enemies” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 222). The poet also indicates that Palestinians are not only living under siege in the occupied territory but they have always been subjected to police investigations in neighboring Arab countries and elsewhere: “We are sieged in our homeland and we are also sieged outside our country”. In spite of the continuity of internal siege and external police interrogations “the stone revolution is going on” says the poet.

### **Conclusion: The Palestinian Uprising and the Continuation of Struggle**

Abdul-Hamid argues that as the Uprising rages on against the Israeli occupation forces and the brutal assaults against Palestinian children bulldozes forward claiming hundreds of lives and thousands of casualties, the Arab rulers turn their backs on the tragic realities of Palestinian life. As the Uprising goes on, says the poet, “the endless misery” not of the Palestinians but “of the Arab people goes on”. In a desperate attempt, the poet sarcastically seeks to awaken the Arab rulers from their immortal sleep telling them: “Hi, hi Arabs / the Palestinian children are fighting our colonizers only with stones” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 222). Like Abdul-Hamid the Tunisian poetess Samira Al-Kasrawi attacks the Arab rulers who turned their backs on the Palestinian Uprising. In “*The Song of the Stones and the Pomegranate Buds*” she criticizes, the passive attitude of the Arab rulers toward the plight of the Palestinian people: “you / sick Arabs / the Arabs who are obsessed with accumulating wealth and gold / the Arabs who are interested in empty sermons / the Arabs seeking crowns and thrones / now it is time for the fire of anger / the fire of the stone / this fire will certainly eat up everything” (Al-Makaleh 1992: 263).

In the above-cited same poem, Al-Kasrawi starts with the following lines: “The beautiful rose may dream of rain / the rose may whisper to the eyes of the moon / the trees grow out of their wounds / and the floods of stones grow out of anger” (cited in Al-Makaleh, 1992: 262). Affirming the fact that the first Palestinian Uprising is born out of Palestinian suffering and the dire need to have an independent homeland and defend themselves against a merciless enemy, the poetess addresses the Palestinian child, the icon of the popular Uprising (the first Uprising): “Get into the horizons of history / and give us your wisdom / embrace our land and pick up your stones / the banners of your victory / the dead body of the Palestinian martyr is a minaret / beaming into the darkness of our time” (cited in Al-Makaleh 1992: 263). In Al-Kasrawi’s poem, the Palestinian child, engaged in the Uprising, is able to confront the army of

“the invaders” and the “Yankee ships” carrying military support to the Israeli colonizers. The Palestinian child fights the colonizers and their imperialistic allies until he dies winning the honor and dignity of martyrdom: “your brave steps take you into the middle of explosions / your blood embroiders the stone you hold in your hand / as you sleep in comfort in the dust of our land” (263).

The last line cited above refers to the Palestinian ritual of placing a stone in the hands of the Uprising children killed during confrontations with the Israeli army as the Palestinian people carry their dead bodies for burial. Al-Kasrawi not only limits herself to symbols such as “the stone” used as a tool of struggle and resistance by the Palestinian Uprising children but also employs other symbols such as “the David Star” signifying the Israeli army machine and “the Palestinian orange fields” suggesting Palestinian land and identity. She indicates how the Israeli tanks marked with “the David Star” are brutally employed to eliminate the national Palestinian symbols represented by the Palestinian orange trees and olive orchards. However the Lebanese poetess, Huda Al-Noamani points out that the Israeli army can never put an end to the Palestinian dream of having an independent homeland because of the inevitable continuity of the Palestinian resistance and struggle. She characterizes the Uprising not only as a significant resistance movement but also as an extension to the struggle of Fatah, the military wing of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the pre-Oslo agreement era. In a poem entitled, “*The Fatah Connection*”, Al-Noamani describes the Palestinian children engaged in the Uprising as: “Children of fire, the Fatah connection / they bravely enter into every castle / they enter into the caves of all mountains / looking for stones / They kindle the sparks of the Uprising / when the fire turns into ashes / they burst into flames” (cited in Al-Makaleh, 1992: 269).

In his poem, “*A Daily Scene*”, the revolutionary Palestinian poet, Mureed Al-Barghouthi depicts the Uprising in a new context using shattered rhythms and broken cadences “freezing the poetic language” of his poems and selecting appropriate words different from what he calls “the pompous language of false heroism” used by the Arab tyrants (cited by Ismail 2003: 4). In “*A Daily Scene*”, Al-Barghouthi penetrates inside a Palestinian refugee camp and visualizes an image of “a room with a broken window”. In this location, “there is no barrier between the clouds in the sky / and the rotten edge of the rag in the room” says the poet. Then the poet takes the reader to another corner in the room where “a tired mother is suckling her baby”. Inside the room the persona of the poem stands behind the window watching a routinely and daily scene taking place outside: “young boys loading their slings with stones / and sounds of cheering crowds carrying banners / and soldiers proudly shooting at children” (Al-Barghouthi 2002: 196). As a result of the chaos, created by the Israeli soldiers, “one boy was killed and another martyr / was still bleeding on the asphalt” (Al-Barghouthi 2002: 197). The poem that starts with “soft is this wintry day” ends with scenes of Palestinian blood on the asphalt and daily scenes of crowds carrying banners and dead bodies for burial which had become an integral part of the Palestinian collective memory and historical record of pain and suffering.

In “*My Grandmother’s Box*”, Al-Barghouthi speaks about “our collective funeral procession moving under the rain” evoking significant episodes from the Palestinian history of displacement and agony using the grandmother’s box as an objective correlative. The grandmother’s box contains “the letters of her loved ones which still carry the smell of the tears she has been shedding after their departure” and “the picture of one of her grandsons who was killed in Beirut” in addition to the “pictures of her new neighbors”. The speaker in the poem hints that his grandmother always has new neighbors, an indication of the never-ending displacement and Diaspora of the Palestinian people who move from one exile into another and from one massacre into another. The most important things in the grandmother’s box are an old key of her house in Al-Leddah, an address of a house in one of the suburbs of Jerusalem city and a copy of a recent lease of a small house in Damascus” (Al-Barghouthi 2002: 200). The reference to the grandmother’s key is significant because after the 1948 defeat, which resulted into the displacement of thousands of Palestinian families, the Palestinians were told that they would definitely return to their houses and villages after a short period of time in neighboring Arab countries. Therefore they were carrying the keys of their houses and some are still keeping them until now. Ghada Karmi says that in the refugee camps on the borders of Israel,

*Palestinian parents told their children every detail of the villages and towns they had come from, showed them the keys of the houses they had been forced to abandon, recounted stories of their past lives, such that in years to come these children knew Palestine as if they themselves had lived there (Karmi 1999: 4).*

The grandmother persona who still carries the key of her Jerusalem house is the centre of Al-Barghouthi’s poem. Like all the Palestinian women she has accepted willingly the death of two of her sons who died in two successive nights. The theme of death pervading “*My Grandmother’s Box*” becomes a leitmotif in “*Where Are You Going in a Night Like this?*” written within the context of the Palestinian Uprising as thousands of Palestinians were killed and maimed. On this basis, Al-Barghouthi’s death poem becomes a cry of anger in the face of death itself. The poet urges death to stop reaping the souls and lives of the Palestinian people: “I was about to cry: You death, go away from here / and take the lives of other people / seek others, search for others / who are ready to give you a sanctuary / leave our children alone, let other people hold your deadly arm / as you walk across crowded roads” (cited by Abdul-Aziz 2004: 3). Then, Al-Barghouthi advises death to stay at home and not to get outside because it may be targeted by Israeli snipers and helicopter gunships: “Where are you going in a night like this? / who is ready to protect you from October’s cold / or from the eyes of smart airplanes / or stealth bombers / or the looks of snipers hidden in corners / whose bullets are able to kill anything moving even partners lying in bed” (4). In “*A Night that Has no Equal*”, Al-Barghouthi creates an image of Muhammad Al-Dura, the famous Palestinian child who was brutally killed during the Uprising 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 Inifada 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". 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 Muhammad 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?"

Like the poetry of other Palestinian and Arab poets, discussed in this paper, Al-Barghouthi's impressive poems were inspired by the Uprising of a colonized nation fighting alone, using stones and the bodies of its young people in its struggle against a vicious invader armed with a horrible military machine. In this context, Al-Barghouthi's poetry like the poetry of other Uprising poets turns into an instrument of resistance, a weapon aiming to disrupt the hegemonic boundaries imposed on the Palestinian people by submissive Arab rulers and imperialistic/racist enemies. While native American poets have tried to maintain a protective boundary as a way of asserting and defending their cultural integrity, the Palestinian Uprising poets seek to smash all boundaries - geographical, political, military and psychological - that may prevent them from restoring their homeland. Like native American poets who defend their tribal sovereignty and reservation lands against the capitalist policy of recurrent American governments, the Uprising poets, seek to defend Palestinian land and identity affirming the values of struggle and the right of existence, in an independent homeland, for all the Palestinians including those who live either in Diaspora or refugee camps.

Like all oppressed peoples, Palestinian and native Americans have been engaged in struggle against colonial and oppressive forces that seek to banish them outside the realm of human history. On this basis, the Palestinian and native American poetry, dealt with in this study, is a reflection of indigenous struggle and protest against hegemonic and colonial forces. Written under conditions that imply a mode of power relations imposed by the policies of imperialist domination, the counter-hegemonic poetry of native American and Palestinian Uprising poets personifies a challenge to the forces of evil that seek to obliterate their existence and identity. Using poetry as an instrument of struggle, native American and Palestinian poets aim not only to resurrect what colonialism has demolished but also targets social change through resistance. Rewriting the history of colonization from the perspective of the

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## Notes

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<sup>iv</sup> All citations from Arabic poetry and prose are translated by the author of the paper unless references to other sources are mentioned in the text.

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