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ABSTRACT

Performance Poetry and the Representation of Women and Palestine

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Performance poetry has always been a way to perform and convey an emotionally charged message to a broad audience. This study aimed to examine performed poems written in English by Palestinian poets some of whom live outside Palestine that examined the Palestinian cause as a major issue that should not be ignored. Our research showed that there are studies on the analysis of poems written and performed in other languages such as Indonesian poetry (Cole, 2010), English/ Spanish code-switched poetry (Napiorski, 2011), and Classical Arabic poetry (Al-Zubaidy, 2014). However, there is no research on Palestinian poetry written in English, and particularly conducted in Palestine. Therefore, we decided to focus our attention on the works of Palestinians that are written and performed in English and aim to deliver an important message about the representation of women in Palestinian culture, cause, and resistance. Our analysis focused on one poem, “Love Letters from Palestine” (Dajani, 2014), though we also examined four other poems to provide support for our claims: “The Palestine I know” (Ziadah, 2016), “Shades of anger” (Ziadah, 2011), “Gaza” (Hammad, 2014), and “Nakba” (Kanazi, 2013). All these poems focused on women in Palestine, often representing Palestine as a woman, along with the Palestinian culture and resistance. In these poems, we noted five recurring themes linking the situation of Palestinian women and the occupation: arranged marriage, anger about the past, culture, anger about the present, and hope for the future. “Love Letters from Palestine” considered an additional, especially interesting, theme, “scorned love” as it drew a parallel between a woman whose husband had never loved her and the complex links between Israel and Palestinians.