"correct political practice."[51] The dynamics of debate in which the cultural politics of resistance are engaged challenge both the monolithic historiographical practices of domination and the unidimensional responses of dogma to them.

Amilcar Cabral, wielding the "weapon of theory," wrote that "The national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they have been subjected." (US, 130) Whereas the social and the personal have tended to displace the political in western literary and cultural studies, the emphasis in the literature of resistance is on the political as the power to change the world. The theory of resistance literature is in its politics.

ii
Resistance poetry

Poetry
Forgive me for having helped you understand
you're not made of words alone.

Roque Dalton – "El Salvador"

Poetry and resistance

Nicolás Guillén is one of Cuba's most important contemporary poets and director of the National Association of Cuban Writers. As a poet, Guillén, who was born in 1902, participated in the early stages of Cuba's national liberation in this century, then in the Cuban revolution, and continues to act in the councils and government of post-revolutionary Cuba.[1] As a poet too, he has consistently presented his readers with the challenge to assert the viability of their own Cuban and Latin American culture and its historical past. In a poem entitled "Problems of underdevelopment," published in 1972, Guillén wrote:

Monsieur Dupont calls you uneducated
because you don't know which was
the favorite grandchild of Victor Hugo.

Herr Müller has started shouting
because you don't know the day
(the exact one) when Bismarck died.

Your friend Mr. Smith,
English or Yankee, I don't know,
becomes incensed when you write *Shell.*
(It seems that you hold back an "l"
and that besides you pronounce it *chel.*)

O.K. So what?
When it's your turn,
have them say *cacarajicara,*
and where is the Aconcagua
and who was Sucré,
and where on this planet
did Martí die.

And please:
make them always talk to you in Spanish.[2]

The title to Guillén's poem, "Problems of underdevelopment," posits from the outset the necessary connection between politics, economics and culture. The term "underdevelopment," taken from economic theory and the analysis of the historical relation within the world capitalist system between the First and the Third Worlds, invokes the kind of dependency theory proposed by Andre Gunder Frank and other analysts and critics of global dynamics, as well as such studies as that by Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.*[3] There is furthermore an ideological strategy implicit in the poem itself in the trivializing sequence of representatives of European and United States political culture which the poet invokes: Victor Hugo and the French Revolution, Bismarck and the Berlin Conference of 1885 at which Europe divided Africa amongst its various member nations, and finally Shell and the multinational corporations of US imperialism. Against these figures of hegemonic domination, their symbolic stature diminished here through association with the minutiae of their very human life, Guillén asserts the significance of Latin American history and tradition. *Cacarajicara,* a word evoking African and native Indian sounds, is a Cuban place name now used as an exclamation of approval. (CNG, 178) The Aconcagua, part of the Andes in Argentina, is the highest mountain in the Americas. Antonio José Sucré, the Venezuelan independence

leader who liberated Ecuador and Peru, was assassinated in 1830. And Jose Martí, the nineteenth century Cuban poet and revolutionary, died, after years of exile in the United States and Spanish America, in his native Cuba in 1895. The Cuban Biblioteca Nacional 'Jose Martí', named after him, remains an intellectual center for the poets, writers, and scholars of the Cuban revolution.

Poetry is capable not only of serving as a means for the expression of personal identity or even nationalist sentiment. Poetry, as a part of the cultural institutions and historical existence of a people, is itself an arena of struggle. That struggle, as it is taking place, culturally as well as politically and militarily, today in various of the countries of the Third World, from East Timor in Indonesia to Central American El Salvador, has been dramatically conditioned by the modern history of colonialism and the imperialist project of the west, of Europe and the United States. The current circumstances of the latest phase of decolonization and post-colonialism have in many instances only exacerbated the conditions of struggle and outside domination which have long characterized Third World societies. An important consequence of the First World's military, economic, and political intervention in the Third World, especially in the last 150 years and no less urgently today, has been the catastrophic disruption of Third World peoples' cultural and literary traditions. These traditions constitute in an important way their means of identifying themselves as a group, as a people, no less than as a nation, with a historicity of their own and a claim to an autonomous, self-determining role on the contemporary staging grounds of history.

The poets, like the guerilla leaders of the resistance movements, consider it necessary to wrest that expropriated historicity back, reappropriate it for themselves in order to reconstruct a new world-historical order. As Pablo Neruda, the Chilean poet, writes in his "Epic," commemorating the assassination in 1934 of the Nicaraguan popular leader Augusto Sandino which was carried out by Somozan forces backed by the United States government:

For the sake of peace one sad night
General Sandino took up the invitation
to celebrate his brave resistance

with the Ambassador from "America"
(Because like pirates, they confiscated
the name of the whole continent.)[4]

Ernesto Cardenal, currently the Minister of Culture in Nicaragua's Government of National Reconstruction, pointed in one of his "Epigrams" to a similar hegemonic confiscation of cultural property, when he wrote:

Haven't you read in *Novedades,** my love:
WATCHMEN OF PEACE, GENIUS OF LABOR
PALADIN OF DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA
DEFENDER OF CATHOLICISM IN AMERICA
THE PROTECTOR OF THE PEOPLE
THE BENEFACTOR . . .?
They plunder the people's language
and falsify the people's words.
(Just like the people's money.)
That's why we poets polish our poems so much.
That's why my love poems are important. (NR, 85)

The role of poetry in the liberation struggle itself has thus been a crucial one, both as a force for mobilizing a collective response to occupation and domination and as a repository for popular memory and consciousness. According to Elias Khouri, the Lebanese novelist and critic, writing in his article, "The world of meanings in Palestinian poetry,"

> Language is the very framework of steadfastness (*sumūd*) . . . Language is the repository of the collective memory. It is the basic national value which must be preserved. The role of poetry is therefore a major one, not only because it is more powerful than other forms of writing as a means of political mobilization, but also because it sustains, within the popular memory, national continuity.[5]

In pursuing similar issues, Maina wa Kinyatti, the Kenyan historian who edited and translated *Thunder from the Mountains,*

* The magazine, *Novedades*, was a major apologist for the Somoza family.

a collection of Mau Mau patriotic songs, published in 1980, nearly two decades after Kenyan independence, describes his enterprise in producing this collection: "The main objective in translating these songs is to let them answer the anti-Mau Mau Kenyan intellectuals and their imperialist masters who, until now, continue to deny the Movement's national character."[6] According to Maina, who worked on his anthology with former members of the Mau Mau movement,

> Besides being an expression of anti-colonial culture, these songs constitute an important pool of information, a kind of archive, on the Mau Mau Movement, which enables us to probe deeper into Mau Mau history and really understand its political objectives and methods. For us today these songs are an echo, a record, of our people's determination to liberate their country from foreign domination. (TM, 3)

As Edward Dorn and Gordon Brotherston point out, however, in the introduction to their 1968 anthology of Latin American resistance poetry, *Our Word: Guerrilla Poems from Latin America,* these poems, significant as they are to the "popular memory" of peoples struggling for their national liberation and important as they might be in mobilizing collective resistance, are not always "easy to get hold of. There may be, probably are, many more poets we should have wanted to include had work by them been available."[7] Nearly two decades later, these poems, the poetry written in the context of national liberation organizations and resistance movements, remain singularly unavailable to the literary institutions of the west. Nor do they conform to the conventional and canonical criteria of poetic inspiration and composition applied by the Western critics and practitioners of poetry. Neither concerned with the contemporary theories of the "pleasure of the text" nor invoking the Romantic tradition of "recollection in tranquillity," the poems of resistance, often composed on the battlefield or commemorating its casualties, the losses to the community, challenge instead the bourgeois institutions of power which often limit such luxuries to the economically privileged and leisured classes of a world readership. For the resistance poets, like Balach Khan of Baluchistan, a member of

the Baluch People's Liberation Front, there is neither pleasure nor tranquillity in the recollection of emotions. In Balach Khan's poem, "I have no way of saying this gently," the poet-messenger returns from the battlefield of the liberation struggle bearing the news of a fallen comrade. "Sister," he says to the girl, the man's wife,

> I have no other way of
> saying this gently – your husband
> killed in battle – your brother lost.
> Freedom's hunger claimed them
> and their love for this soil, these rocks.

The poet shares the woman's grief at the death of their fellow, at once husband and guerrilla.

> O woman mutilated by the absence
> of so many, your broken dreams
> like the jagged pieces of
> the moon, now pierce me.[8]

"It is possible," however, as the Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman reminds the Western reader of *The Empire's Old Clothes*, an analysis of the forms of cultural imperialism and their impact on the minds of the First as well as the Third World,

> it is possible that a society undergoing rebirth, that is painfully casting off the habits of domination and tradition which before went unquestioned, could be able with more vigor, more rage, more insight, to criticize the patterns and structures which, as their own champions vigorously proclaim, have been standardized and uniformly spread throughout the planet.
>
> (EOC, 8–9)

The poems of resistance, produced by, as well as being productive of, resistance movements throughout the Third World, participate in a radical critique of what Dorfman has called the "standard, uniform patterns" of culture, patterns, that is, of western ideological domination which are currently disseminated,

whether through the conventions of literary genre and protocol or by means of the structures of educational institutions, on an international scale. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan writer and novelist, found, for example, that Wordsworth's daffodils had little meaning for his young son whose post-colonial Kenyan education was still largely determined by the residual curricular standards and restrictions of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) conferred by the British school system. Ngugi's son, the writer relates, thought upon examination that perhaps daffodils were something like "little fish in a lake." (WP, 4) Like Ngugi, the resistance poets articulate the aggressive demand for another poetry, "a different poem," as the Cape Verdean writer Onesimo Silveira entitles his own composition, with neither English daffodils nor "mouths in need of bread."

> The people of the islands want a different poem
> For the people of the islands
> A poem without exiles complaining
> In the calm of their existence;
> A poem without children nourished
> On the black milk of aborted time
> A poem without mothers gazing
> At the vision of their sons, motherless.
> . . . .
> A poem without words choked
> By the harrows of silence.[9]

The title to Silveira's poem refers not only to the poem demanded, however, but to the poem itself which raises the demand. The resistance poems actively engage in the historical process of struggle against the cultural oppression of imperialism, and assert thereby their own polemical historicity. The progressive tension between title and artefact evidenced in "A different poem" is a tension which is already essential to the dynamics and agenda of the resistance movement which must contend with the immediate exigencies of past and present in order to elaborate its vision of the future. It is rendered manifest again in "A poem yet to be written" by Jorge Rebelo, a member

of the Mozambican national liberation organization FRELIMO, when he wrote:

> I should like
> to be able
> to write a poem
> which was so beautiful, so rapturous
> inspiring and profound
> like the People's victory
> . . . .
> A poem which explains
> the reason why we won:
> it was the People who fought—
> the whole People, guided
> by the correct line
> . . . .
> Somebody's going to write it some day,
> this life that already exists
> before it is a poem.[10]

As Leroy Vail and Landeg White maintain in their article, "Forms of resistance: songs and perceptions of power in colonial Mozambique," poetry and poetic expression in Africa were "welcomed as a major channel of communication between powerless and powerful, the client and the patron, the ruled and the ruler."[11] Resistance poems, however, attempt furthermore to transform these relationships of power. The "poem yet to be written" is, as Jorge Rebelo demands, to be

> the absolute
> denial
> of exploitation.

The texts of what have thus been called "resistance poems" have been written by poets from those areas of the world, now classified, however arbitrarily, as the "Third World," from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, and the Arab Middle East. Many of these poets, like the Nicaraguan Tomas Borge,

Dennis Brutus of South Africa, or Mahmud Darwish from Palestine, have suffered long periods of detention and torture in the prisons of the colonizer. They have also, as in the case of Balach Khan, carried guns on the battlefield as active partisans in the national liberation fronts. Some poet-guerrillas too, like Ernesto Cardenal of Nicaragua or Angola's Agostinho Neto, have gone on to become ministers in the new governments formed following the resistance movement's successful struggle against the tyranny of the colonizing power or the oppressive comprador regime. Nor has administration terminated their poetic activity any more than their political commitments, although it has posed new problems for the poet's role in society, problems which the Sandinista writers discuss with Margaret Randall in *Risking a Somersault in the Air*.[12] In those countries, such as Palestine and South Africa, where the liberation struggle is not yet over, poetry continues to play its critically active role in the liberation movement. Poetry is part of the struggle. It is one of the arenas in which that struggle is waged. As the resistance poet from El Salvador, Roque Dalton, wrote in his poem on poetry:

> Poetry
> Forgive me for having helped you understand
> you're not made of words alone.

Roque Dalton was assassinated in 1974, apparently by militaristic members of the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), the resistance organization to which he himself belonged, who disagreed with his analysis of the historical and political situation in El Salvador and Central America and the strategy which such an analysis entailed. His poetry, "not made of words alone," was part of his guerrilla activity and that activity placed the poet within a struggle for the liberation and self-determination of oppressed peoples that cost him his own life. "To be revolutionary," as Dalton wrote in his essay *Poetry and Militancy in Latin America*,

> when the revolution has eliminated its enemies and has in every sense consolidated itself can be, no doubt about it, more or less glorious and heroic. But to be so when the condition of

being revolutionary is usually rewarded with death, that is truly the dignity of poetry. The poet takes then the poetry of his or her generation and gives it over to history.[13]

Resistance poems, Dalton's as well as those of other resistance and Third World poets, are part of a historical process, one which requires "taking sides." According to Armand Mattelart, however, "To tackle the problem of the ideological apparatuses of imperialism is already to take sides. It is to recognize as a field of class struggle a domain which many of the actors in this struggle cover up with a show of neutrality."[14] Neither the self-satisfaction of aestheticism, of a belief in art for art's sake, nor theoretical claims to scientific or academic objectivity can account adequately for the historical challenge posed by the literature of resistance to the cultural hegemony of the west. Within this historical conjuncture, the inherited notion of literature in the west as objective, aesthetic, representing universal human values is either compelled to redefine its criteria or is destined inevitably to participate in the First World's post-colonial project of cultural imperialism.

This cultural imperialism is, however, to be found often as much in post-colonial regimes as in colonized countries. In contemporary neo-colonial Kenya, for example, as in Portuguese Mozambique until independence in 1975, writers, artists, and intellectuals have been subjected to the repressive control of the state apparatus. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in one instance, spent a year in prison in 1977 under Jomo Kenyatta for his successful collective theatrical project in a Gikuyu village which effectively mobilized the entire local population in building the popular dramatic production and theater complex at Kamiriithu.[15] In El Salvador too, Roque Dalton was part of a resistance movement opposed to the comprador authoritarian regime supported by the western powers, and most especially the United States. Similarly minority populations such as the Kurds in Iran and Iraq, or the Sindh and the Baluch in Pakistan, have organized in popular resistance movements to oppose the neo-colonial ethnic regimes which dominate those countries.

The case of the Baluch

In describing the drama of contemporary Pakistan, Eqbal Ahmad sets a "sense of sadness" against the buoyant tradition of the

people. "What you find very striking now," he writes, "is that a sense of extreme sadness pervades Pakistan today. You feel that the energy of these people is sapped by some sort of grief." For Ahmad, such sadness has replaced the former "intensity, the obvious dynamism of Pakistani streetlife, the Pakistani social life, the fast traffic, the frequency with which people break out into laughter or singing or prancing in the streets, the intense nervous energy with which you will find workers working."[16] In 1980, when these comments were made, the people of Pakistan were still recovering from the *coup d'état* of 1977 in which Zia ul-Haq overthrew the Bhutto regime and the execution two years later of former president Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Thus the sadness in the streets is seen by Eqbal Ahmad as located in the people's "feeling of guilt, perhaps of shame, a sense of responsibility for what happened."

A sadness echoes too in the Baluch poems of Balach Khan, a sadness, however, not of shame or guilt, but rather the sadness of "children who dream of more light/than the sun can spare." ("Quetta") It is a sadness engendered by an ongoing struggle, a struggle not yet consummated. The series of poems by Balach Khan[17] recount the poet's participation in the 1973–7 insurgency in Baluchistan as a result of which he himself lived several years in exile in London, returning to Pakistan only several years later under a general amnesty. The poet's personal itinerary is located in a historical process.

Since it was created as a separate Muslim state in 1947 with the end of the British raj's direct influence in the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan's successive regimes, controlled largely by the Punjabis who are a majority in the country, have failed to unify the several populations living within its national boundaries. Following the secession of Bengali East Pakistan in 1971 and the creation of Bangladesh, the minority peoples of Pakistan, in Sindh, the Northwest Frontier Province, and Baluchistan, have variously contended for equal rights and/or an autonomous state.[18] The Baluchistan insurgency of 1973–7 was the latest of the Baluch uprisings against Islamabad, which, for its part, has alternately ignored and suppressed their demands for representation and independence, demands which are greatly complicated by the fact that the territory of the Baluch homeland is divided

among Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Although nearly half the Baluch population, for reasons of employment, politics, or need, now lives outside of Baluchistan, their desire for the wild, rugged terrain of the homeland is rooted deep in their traditions.

This commitment to the homeland echoes in sixteenth-century war ballads which sing that "the lofty heights are our comrades/the pathless gorges our friends" no less than in contemporary patriotic songs commemorating former national heroes such as Nasir Khan:

> Pleasant as the homeland of another may be,
> Populous and affluent and great of name,
> Streams of honey may run there.
> But for Nasir
> The "dry wood of the homeland" is better than all the
> world.[19]

Balach Khan's poem "Quetta" also laments the present fate of one of Baluchistan's most important cities, the former gateway to India, where it now happens that "police and soldiers in a dozen/different uniforms, tramp the roadsides,/and children hug the shopfronts,/eyes down, terrified of being stopped." Like the ancestral ballads, "the epic poems of Baluch chivalry" ("Voices of dawn"), and the modern anthems of Baluchistan, the verses of Balach Khan memorialize his land and his people's past and their present struggle, for, as the poet maintains, "from the tragedy of beautiful places/the Baluch will write their own history." ("Passing a graveyard at night")

Balach Khan's poems also contain a lyrical examination of the role of the poet himself in the liberation struggle and the challenges to poetry which come from the resistance movement. A number of the poems, like "The singer" written for Mayara Noor, or again like "The language of stones" composed for "an Urdu poetess after reading her poem on the Baluch struggle," are dedicated to other writers. In this last poem, the poet who fights his way across the Baluch mountains reflects not only on the changed circumstances of poetic composition, but on the very sources of what has long been venerated as poetic inspiration:

> I am altogether overwhelmed.
> How do you write or pass
> the time of day? Where do you sit,
> on a chair, desk, bed, the floor?
> I do all my thinking on these endless marches and sometimes
> in the red-eyed dawn, a poem
> settles itself like a leaf
> on a clean white page.

Although the Baluch resistance poet's task is perhaps still governed by the twofold Horatian requirement of "entertainment and instruction," these two injunctions are given a new urgency by the contemporary struggle against a history of oppression. In his poem "But being an only son" Balach Khan describes the young shepherd who daily provided the guerillas with fresh milk from his goats, but who, "being an only son," was not allowed to participate in active combat.

> He would hang around me and touch
> the radio, typewriter with far away fingers
> like objects he did not understand,
> but would handle my rifle as if he knew.

In Pakistani Baluchistan, the country's poorest province where the literacy rate in 1976 was only 6–9 percent as compared to a national average of 16 percent, (IAS, 161) the need for education, the poet demonstrates, is as imperative as the necessity of armed struggle. And yet the poet is aware too, in his unrelenting examination of poetry, that the writer who would teach has in turn much to learn from his comrades. "Most fighters," as he writes, "have never seen/the sea/i describe it and fail/they imagine it to be/like the sky." ("The sea") The poet's poems stop just short of instruction and instead are able only to point the way. The same poem indeed leads to the sea, and concludes: "once i took a comrade/to the beach/he was too stunned to speak/i could not reach/him for a soundless hour."

That Balach Khan's poems are written in English can perhaps be taken as a significant measure of the educational and cultural exigencies which face the Baluch people in their struggle. Baluch self-determination and independence and an access to history require popular archives as well as arsenals and these poems

themselves contribute to the elaboration of such archives. The issue of readership nonetheless poses inevitably crucial questions. Until 150 years ago, when Baluch scholars began to transcribe the Baluch language in Urdu or Persian script, the Baluch oral tradition and cultural heritage had gone largely unrecorded. More recently a Baluch script called Nastaliq, which resembles Arabic, has been developed by the intellectuals of Baluch nationalism. Given the tribalism which still characterizes Baluch society, however, "one of the most significant indicators of Baluch nationalism," according to Selig Harrison,

> is likely to be the extent to which the Baluch are able to develop a standardized language in a commonly accepted script. Although a lively literature has developed as an adjunct of the nationalist movement, Baluchi books, magazines and newspapers reflect a widespread linguistic confusion. (IAS, 185)

And yet, as the Baluch poet says, acknowledging this dilemma and composing even in English, "I am writing letters in the dust,/ tracing lines of communication/with a stick." ("Poems of absence III")

The sadness of the poems, "when the young die," and of "children [who] dream of more light/than the sun can spare," is given meaning by the struggle not only for liberation but also for communication. The collection includes love poems as well as resistance poems, poems for G., for Dahli, for Mayara Noor, for the Urdu poetess, for Hoaran Marri. Indeed the resistance poems can be read as love poems and vice versa, collapsing categories and elaborating new strategies of expression. These poems, whether read collectively or taken individually, poems in which "Mercedes three tonners carry commandos" across the children's playgrounds ("Children's playground") and the "whack-whack of heliblades" accompanies "the sun [as it] rolls over the horizon/at dawn," carry an enormous burden, the burden, according to the poet, "of those unable to complete the history/of their own bodies, disappearing in/the opposite direction to their journey." ("It is when the young die")

The body divided

Writing in his *Memoirs* toward the end of his life, Pablo Neruda notes,

> There is an old theme, a "body divided," that recurs in the folk poetry of all countries. The popular singer imagines his feet in one place, his kidneys somewhere else, and goes on to describe his whole body, which he has left behind, scattered in countrysides and cities. That's how I felt in those days.[20]

Those days to which the poet refers were in Chile in the 1940s, when Neruda was finishing his long epic poem, "*Canto general*," moving from house to house, in hiding from the government authorities, but received by the people who offered him refuge. The dismemberment of the poetic identity is reconstructed in ties of solidarity with the people themselves. That dismemberment, part of imperialism's strategy, conditions, however, the new literary and cultural agenda of the poets of the resistance movements and national liberation organizations. Responding to the crisis articulated by Neruda in his later poem "Central America,"

> Land as slim as a whip,
> hot as torture,
> your step in Honduras, your blood
> in Santo Domingo, at night,
> your eyes in Nicaragua
> touch, call, grip me,
> and throughout American lands
> I knock on doors to speak,
> I tap on tongues that are tied,
> I raise curtains, plunge
> my hands into blood:
> Sorrows
> of my land, death rattle of
> the great established silence,
> long-suffering people,
> slender waist of tears. (NR, 21)

the resistance poets have produced a new and vital corpus of literary and poetic work. That corpus is remarkable not only for

its coherence and magnitude, but also for the developed character of its challenge both to western literary convention and to the sway of traditional values from within their own cultures.

The resistance movements, within the context of which the poets write, are organized political and guerrilla movements which had and continue to have as their aim the liberation of the land and the people through armed struggle from the forces of outside oppression, from the political, military, and cultural hegemony and domination by imperialist and colonialist countries. In 1956, the MPLA, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, was founded in Portuguese Angola. Fourteen years after its first armed action in Luanda in 1961, an independent Angolan republic was proclaimed on 11 November 1975. In that same year, 1975, Portuguese Mozambique was liberated following a fourteen-year struggle carried out by FRELIMO, the Mozambique Liberation Front. Similarly successful in its liberation struggle was Nicaragua's FSLN, the Sandinista National Liberation Front, founded in 1961 and named after Augusto C. Sandino, the early hero of Nicaraguan resistance. The FSLN removed the Somoza regime from power in July 1979. Nelson Mandela, however, leader of South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), remains in prison in South Africa, while the movement continues its struggle against the white apartheid regime in that country. So too the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), formed as an independent Palestinian movement in 1968, continues to fight for Palestinian self-determination and an independent autonomous Palestinian state.

Out of these resistance movements and their struggle on political, military, and cultural fronts, a new pantheon of letters is emerging, one forged in the battle against imperialism and exploitation. The poets, adherents and partisans of given organizations with national identities, manifest in their poems a consciousness of the larger arena within which they write. Chile's Neruda, like Cuba's Guillēn, composes poems in honor of Augusto Sandino of Nicaragua. Angolan Viriato da Cruz, in his poem "Black mother," honors the struggle on three continents:

Voices from the cane plantations,
  from paddy fields, the coffee farms,

    the silk works, the
  cotton fields
Voices from plantations in Virginia
from farms in the Carolinas
  Alabama
    Cuba
      Brazil
  Voices from Brazilian sugar plants
    from the tonga drums, from the
    pampas, from factories,
  Voices from Harlem District South,
    voices from slum locations
  Voices wailing blues going up the
    Mississippi, echoing from rail road wagons.
Voices weeping with Carrother's voice
    "Lord God what will have we done"
  Voices of all voices in the proud voice
    of Langston
  in the beautiful voice of Guillén. (WBBF, 53–4)

Poetess Noémia de Sousa represents the Mozambican João:

he suffered with the passivity of the peasant women
he felt the sun piercing like a thorn in the Arabs' midday
he bargained on bazaar benches with the Chinese
he sold tired green vegetables with the Asian traders
he howled spirituals from Harlem with Marion Anderson
he swayed to the Chope marimbas on a Sunday
he cried out with the rebels their cry of blood. (WBBF, 71)

Nelson Mandela's imprisonment in South Africa provokes José Craveirinha to write in Mozambique his poem entitled "Since my friend Nelson Mandela went to live on Robben Island" (SH, 134–6). And in Baluchistan Balach Khan remembers in his poem "But being an only son:"

I shift from rock
to rock, hearing the Palestinians
are fighting and dying in Lebanon,
their obstinate blood flows in my bones.

Nonetheless, for each of these movements, the ANC, FRELIMO, MPLA, the PLO, and the FSLN, as for others – like the Vietnamese, the Kurdish, the Cuban, or the Algerian – the questions of national culture and poetry have been crucially important as well. The challenge was raised already by Amilcar Cabral when he wrote, "The national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they have been subjected." This complex role of poetry within the liberation struggle is part of the poems themselves.

A. N. C. Kumalo is a South African poet currently living in exile in London. His name, A. N. C. Kumalo, which is a pseudonym, bespeaks the strength of his identification of his own poetic identity with that of the African National Congress (ANC) and its ongoing struggle against South Africa's white racist government. The ANC, which was formed in 1912 and formally inaugurated in 1948, began a campaign of passive resistance and labor strikes in the early 1950s. Only later, and after considerable internal debate, in 1961, was the decision taken to engage in revolutionary activity and wage an armed struggle in order to liberate South Africa and its people from the white Afrikaner regime and its repressive system of apartheid.[21] Kumalo's poem "Red our colour" identifies further the role of poetry with the guerrilla activity carried out by the resistance organization:

Let's have poems
blood-red in colour
ringing like damn bells.

Poems
that tear at the oppressor's face
and smash his grip.

Poems that awaken man:
Life not death
Hope not despair
Dawn not dusk
New not old
Struggle not submission.

Poet
let the people know
that dreams can become
reality.

Talk of freedom
and let the plutocrat
decorate his parlour walls
with the perfumed scrawls of dilettantes.

Talk of freedom
and touch people's eyes
with the knowledge of the power
of multitudes
that twists prison bars like grass
and flattens granite walls like putty.

Poet
find the people
help forge the key
before the decade
eats the decade
eats the decade.[22]

"Red our colour" demands that the reader, like Roque Dalton's poem, recognize that poetry is "not made of words alone." Poetry, Kumalo demands, should be "blood-red" and "ringing." It should "tear at the oppressor's face" and "smash his grip," leaving to the oppressor and his well-appointed interiors and parlour walls that other poetry, "the perfumed scrawls of dilettantes." Unadorned with the elegant and figurative accoutrements of aestheticism, Kumalo's poem asserts a brutally aggressive sparseness, a call to revolution in poetry.

FRELIMO, in introducing a collection of the movement's resistance poems, *Poems of Combat*, in 1971, had claimed that

> our poetry is also a slogan. Like a slogan it is born out of necessity, out of reality. While in colonialism and capitalism, culture and poetry were amusements of the rich, our poetry of today is a necessity, a song which goes out of our heart to raise our

> spirit, guide our will, reinforce our determination and broaden our perspective.[23]

The polemical quality of Kumalo's poem, like that of many resistance poems where the very bareness of the language is part of the offensive, represents a critical dimension of the poems' attack on certain forms of cultural imperialism. As Keith Ellis pointed out in his study of the Cuban poet Guillén, the tendency to dismiss much of Third World poetry as "propaganda" or "pamphleteering" derives in fact from the attempted universal legislation of what is a very local or regionally-based definition of poetry, one which, following Aristotle's script in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, sees in metaphor the essential ingredient of poetic language. "In fact," Ellis writes, "metaphor has achieved so much prestige among certain groups in our century as to prompt a tendency among those groups to regard as 'anti-poetry' manifestations of poetry in which its suzerainty is not apparent." (CNG, 48) In Kumalo's poem, "Red our colour," the only metaphors, or rather in this case similes, are those which envisage the revolutionary transformation of social reality and the destruction of repressive state apparatuses: poems, that is, "ringing like bells" that will "twist prison bars like grass" and "flatten granite walls like putty."

The institutions of the state order and its authoritarian control are the target of the resistance poems just as much as of the resistance movement's military and political operations. Many of the poets involved in the struggle have experienced intimately the oppressive force of these institutions, from within which they seek to redefine through their poetry the possibilities of a new, revised social order. "Today in prison" was written by Dennis Brutus for the occasion of South African Freedom Day, 26 June 1967. Brutus, a South African poet now teaching in the United States, is also president of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee. He left South Africa in 1966 following eighteen months of hard labor on Robben Island and a subsequent year of house arrest. "Today in prison" assaults from within the prison walls the very existence of the state which maintains the prison structure:

> Today in prison
> by tacit agreement

> they will sing just one song:
> Nkosi Sikelela;*
> slowly and solemnly
> with suppressed passion
> and pent up feeling:
> the voices strong and steady
> but with tears close and sharp
> behind the eyes
> and the mind ranging
> wildly as a strayed bird
> seeking some names to settle on
> and deeds being done
> and those who will do the much
> that still needs to be done. (PP, 21)

Like "Red our colour," the poem by Dennis Brutus is linguistically and figuratively stark, with only one simile, that of "the mind ranging/wildly as a strayed bird." The poem itself sings the importance of the ANC anthem, Nkosi Sikelela Afrika, in uniting the prisoners in one of South Africa's notorious prisons through the prospects of a new solidarity. That solidarity, based on collective resistance, is commemorated in a visionary appeal through the "strayed bird," harbinger of the future: "names to settle on/ and deeds being done," the combined forces of poetry and armed struggle.

In signaling the communal function of poetry, Benedict Anderson has emphasized the special importance of the national anthem in identifying the social formation and constitution of nationalisms, what he terms "imagined communities:"

> There is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests – above all in the form of poetry and songs. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda and Indonesia Raya provide

* Nkosi Sikelela Afrika = God Save Africa: the anthem of the ANC.

occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community.[24]

Nkosi Sikelela Afrika, however, though it may indeed be the anthem of an "imagined community" in Anderson's terms, nonetheless is not yet a national anthem. It is an anthem which does more than commemorate the historical accomplishments of a people or group. It also animates the historical struggle of the present and the future: "deeds being done/and those who will do the much/that still needs to be done."

In "Surprisingly singing," by Barry Feinberg, a South African writer, journalist and poet likewise living in exile, it is the solidarity of black men singing, however surprisingly, which sustains the poem and transforms it into the national banner of the resistance movement: green, gold, and black, the colors of the African National Congress.

While whites
on sabbath greens
slowly bowling,
on weekdays
growing gold
back home
black men
break backs,
surprisingly
singing.

(PP, 37)

The poem itself is a standard, the poet a standard bearer of the struggle for liberation. The poet's songs incorporate anew the anthems of the community even as they produce the animating slogans and verses for the resistance movement and its people. Thus A. N. C. Kumalo's "Poem of vengeance" both memorializes the martyred members of the ANC hanged in the Pretoria prison in November 1964 and reactivates their freedom songs:

How did Mini and my brothers die
in that secret hanging place?
You may ask – please let me tell you –
I know.

Singing? Yes – but how they sing!
Big firm Mini
not smiling on this day
a smile at the lips perhaps
but the eyes grim
always grim
when facing the enemy.

Heads high they walk
strong united together
singing Mini's own song*
"Naants' indod' emnyama Verwoerd"
– Watch out Verwoerd the black man will get you –
"Watch out Verwoerd"
the people have taken up this song
"Watch out Verwoerd"
the world sings with Mini.

(PP, 37)

Like the parrot in Achebe's fable in *Things Fall Apart*, the poets of the resistance movements are engaging in what Umberto Eco has called a kind of "semiotic guerrilla warfare," a "*tactic* of decoding where the message as expression does not change but the addressee discovers his *freedom of decoding*."[25] The guerrilla warfare of the poems involves both the mobilization of the fighters and the challenge to the existing order, as in "We shall not mourn the dead," by the Angolan poet and member of the MPLA, Helder Neto. The poem concludes defiantly: MPLA AVAAAAANCAAA! (WBBF, 115) "To point a moral to a comrade" by Marcelino dos Santos, a FRELIMO partisan who became Minister of Economic Planning in the Mozambican government, makes another use of the pamphlet genre. Divided into four parts, or "pamphlets," the poem is regularly disrupted by FRELIMO slogans such as:

REALISE THE PROGRAMME OF FRELIMO
COMPLETE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE
AN END OF EXPLOITATION MAN BY MAN

(WBBF, 117)

* Vuyusile Mini was the composer of many freedom songs.

It concludes:

WE ARE FRELIMO SOLDIERS
ACCOMPLISHING THE PARTY'S TASK
DIGGING THE BASIC SOIL OF REVOLUTION
FOR AN END OF EXPLOITATION MAN BY MAN
TO BUILD COMPLETE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE. (WBBF, 127)

In describing the resistance poetry of Mozambique, Russell Hamilton referred to it as "committed poetry," claiming that such poetry "has its own aesthetic code predicated on its social functionality." According to Hamilton,

> At the height of the armed struggle, in liberated zones, Mozambicans from different regions of the territory learned each other's songs and dances, and thereby contributed to a spirit of national unity that helped obliterate divisive ethnic distinctions. In the camps of these liberated areas some soldiers wrote poetry to express their experiences, their hopes and their resolve. As a didactic tool poetry's mnemonic function frequently served to teach not only moral lessons but also Mozambican history and geography. In effect, poetry recaptured the social function that cultural expression served in pre-colonial times, except that under the aegis of the revolution this new poetry encouraged change as much as it transmitted history and traditions.[26]

The poetic disposition displayed in these resistance poems is radically different from, indeed it is opposed to, the cult of *bienséances* or even academic objectivity traditionally cultivated in western literary or academic establishments, which are most concerned to deny to poetry and culture any political role or access to political power. Literary production must, for the most part, be either domesticated or else disacknowledged as "literature." It is easier, for example, to read *Things Fall Apart* according to Aristotelian precepts of tragedy with Okonkwo as the tragically flawed hero, than to attempt to come to terms with it as an act of resistance against white, European imperialist aggression. Third World writers, however, are raising a different set of

standards. Culture, then, and language are critical as an arena of struggle, no less than as a part of that struggle, as one of the weapons – like the guns, the spear, and the cannon that gave the tortoise his broken shell in Ezinma's fable in *Things Fall Apart*. The use of language is crucial, both as challenge to the antagonist and in redefining the identity of the protagonist, to the strategy of any resistance movement. As in the case of the parrot, however, it is necessary for the people to learn the language, to become practiced in its use.

The education of poetry

In his poem, "Letter from a contract worker," written originally in Portuguese and anthologized in the collection *When Bullets Begin to Flower*, the Angolan poet Antonio Jacinto portrays the frustration and anguish of a society whose traditional fabric has been rent asunder by foreign influence but which is at the same time denied access to the means of renovating its own social organization.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
a letter to tell
of this longing
to see you
and this fear
of losing you
of this thing which deeper than I want, I feel
a nameless pain which pursues me
a sorrow wrapped about my life.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
a letter of intimate secrets
a letter of memories of you
of you
your lips as red as the tacula fruit
your eyes gentle as the macongue
your breasts hard as young mobaque fruit

your light walk
your caresses
better than any that I find down here.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
to bring back our days together in our secret haunts
nights lost in the long grass
to bring back the shadow of your legs
and the moonlight filtering through the endless
palms,
to bring back the madness of our passion
and the bitterness of separation

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
which you could not read without crying
which you would hide from your father Bombo
and conceal from your mother Kieza
which you would read without the indifference
of forgetfulness,
a letter which would make any other
in all Kilombo worthless.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
a letter which the passing wind would take
a letter which the cashew and the coffee trees,
the hyenas and the buffalo,
the caymans and the river fish
could hear
the plants and the animals
pitying our sharp sorrow
from song to song
lament to lament
breath to caught breath
would leave to you, pure and hot,
the burning
the sorrowful words of the letter
I wanted to write you

I wanted to write you a letter
But my love, I don't know why it is,
why, why, why it is, my love,
but you can't read
and I – oh the hopelessness – I can't write. (WBBF, 51–3)

Jacinto's poem presents itself as the unwritten love-letter from a contract worker to the beloved he has left behind in the village. Contract workers were native Africans who hired out to employers for a fixed time at exploitative wages, a practice almost of forced labor known as *chibalo*. It was often the case that the men had been forced by taxation to leave the traditional land in order to find work to pay the required tax to the colonial power.[27] Here the young worker is shown as suffering from the intense desire to write to his love and each stanza begins with the cry of despair: "I wanted to write you a letter/my love." The poem, stanza by stanza, then develops all the passion and intensity of feeling which would have gone into an expression of such a love, only to conclude with the simple statement as to why the letter cannot be written: "you can't read/and I – oh the hopelessness – I can't write."

In Portugal's African colonies, only 2 per cent of the Africans ever learned to read. The poem, then, which is on one level an articulation of the problem of the disparity between intellectuals and the people, between the poet and the contract worker, is also a dramatic statement of the subjugated condition of the colonized under imperialist hegemony. Each stanza addresses a particular feature of that oppressive control and suggests possible responses to it. Stanza 1 presents the conventional lines of an amatory epistle, but in stanza 2 the introduction of African words already suggests the conflict and tension which is now embedded in the social situation. In the third stanza the poet/narrator invokes the nostalgic images of a past now lost, yet stanza 4, which refers to the beloved's father and mother and their probable disapproval, implies as well a critique of the traditional mores. The penultimate stanza goes on to propose a solidarity between the lovers and the land which cooperates in their love affair. The poem itself enacts thus the dissolution of the very genre of love poem through its subtle exposure of the politics of repression at work in

western culture and its domination in the Third World. Not only love, but letters are denied to the colonized by the colonial master. The poem's conclusion points outward, beyond the poem, to the conditions of its production, exploding thereby not only the criteria of closure and autonomy in a literary work, but the privatized and romantic ideology of love dominant in the western tradition. The love affair between the contract worker and his beloved requires for its consummation a radical social transformation.

According to Keith Ellis, the Russian socialist Plekhanov's critique of the art-for-art's-sake movement and its relationship to the bourgeoisie in nineteenth century France finds little applicability in Spanish America:

> The sort of sustained disdain and contempt for the bourgeoisie noted by Plekhanov in the French writers of the nineteenth century (e.g. art for art's sake) would be out of place in Spanish America where such a defined, stable class of readers does not exist. And rare is the writer who is capable of contempt for people in general.
> (CNG, 36)

That same contempt and disdain for a popular readership which is a hallmark of certain modes of artistic expression is similarly irrelevant in Africa and other parts of the Third World struggling for political and cultural independence. Jacinto's poem, "Letter from a contract worker," written prior to Angola's independence, not only represents a certain historical moment in the evolution of the liberation struggle and resistance strategy, it looks ahead as well, as a continuing challenge to the generalized assessments of western specialists on the Third World. According to Jacques Loup, a former World Bank economist, writing in 1980,

> The rapid progress in education [in the Third World] should not make us forget the numerous problems which plague this sector in the Third World. Faced with a rapid increase in the size of classes, these countries have substantially enlarged their teaching staff. Nevertheless, the number of pupils per teacher still remains high even today (more than one and a half times

> what it is in the developed countries); it has in fact hardly varied since 1960. Equally important are the drop-out rates, which have improved only very slowly: even at the end of the sixties nearly half the pupils left school before they had reached the fourth grade.[28]

Jacinto, less interested than the World Bank in statistics, insists on the historical specificity of the question of illiteracy, on "how," as Walter Rodney phrases it, "Europe under-developed Africa."

That underdevelopment in the realm of education is reformulated in the poem by Sergio Vieira of Mozambique, "Four parts for a poem on education left incomplete, because education is for all of us to build:"

> We were like the blind
> stumbling on the stones of ignorance,
> comrades!
> that's how they wanted us
> the bishops
> the companies
> the mineowners!
> heads of blacks
> empty
> and shoulders ready to carry a mountain.
> ignorant
> looking at written words
> when in them
> our price was written!
> (SH, 73)

Education requires the resistance struggle no less than it is necessary for the resistance movement to include education as crucial to its agenda of liberation. Clearly though the poet of "Letter from a contract worker" has been privileged with learning how to read. He is conscious too, however, as evidenced in the irony of the poem's enunciation, of his own problematic but critical role as "educator" of the people, acting and writing as one who will both restore and construct the social integrity of the nation. This construction, as Jacinto's poem implies, must take

place on a new level, a program different from even the traditional one represented by the woman's own father and mother, themselves disapproving of their daughter's thwarted relationship. In the same way that Achebe does not represent the Igbo past as an idyllic Edenic garden, a lost paradise which the Igbo people must recapture, "put back together," in order to secure their future salvation, so these poets of resistance are attempting to elaborate out of their specific experience new methods and cultural priorities for confronting their historical situation. In another of Jacinto's poems, written subsequent to "Letter from a contract worker," the enforced separation between man and woman is cast in very different terms. Here, as in Balach Khan's "I have no way of saying this gently," the separation is required by the exigencies of the resistance struggle:

Kaianga's wife is weeping

Kaianga has gone to war, Kaianga has gone to war

In the solitary township
lights and shadows play silently between the huts
children sleep
old people dream
dogs sit panting
flies buzz round the dunghill
and from the roofs, threads of water drip
– life affected by the absence of men – (WBBF, 93)

It is these, the guerrillas and comrades of the liberation organization, who in part two of Vieira's poem, "Four parts for a poem on education," become the educators:

And there came comrades,
those who cried out strongly
stronger than all the words
which we ignored
and the words brought spears of fire
and we were gunpowder
the words explained the weight of the company
the company which bent
our backs

the words were the whips
tearing our blindness
and in the words we understood. (SH, 77)

The education is such that a new social order is inaugurated, overturning the traditional hierarchies of authority:

they were children
under the bullets
teaching adults
you were thirteen years
and your eyes were opened
with signs that you made on the floor
. . . .
we learned how to read and write.
we made mistakes in our words
we didn't know perfectly
when to put an "s"
or a "c" with a cedilla,
but we all knew how to write
war
and school
and co-operative
and culture
and our machine guns
spelled Freedom (SH, 78–9)

Thus, as Jorge Rebelo, the Mozambican poet of FRELIMO, writes in his "Poem,"

Come, tell me all this, my brother.

And later I will forge simple words
which even the children can understand
words which will enter every house
like the wind
and fall like red hot embers
on our people's souls

In our land
Bullets are beginning to flower. (WBBF, 129)

The new words are necessary because, as Ernesto Cardenal wrote in his "Epigram," the people's language has been plundered, the people's words falsified. The education of resistance is projected to lead to what Vieira went on to call, in the fourth part of his poem on education, a

> Tomorrow,
> when
> colonialism and imperialism
> are only words which are found
> in a dictionary of archaic terms. (SH, 81)

The poems that speak to the necessity of education also implicate their poets in the educational process. It is the resistance poet, like Nicaraguan Joaquin Pasos, celebrated by Cardenal in his "Epitaph for Joaquin Pasos," who has

> purified, in his poems, the language of the people
> in which trade agreements, the Constitution, love letters
> and decrees will one day be written. (NR, 87)

Poetic language is not envisaged here as a rarefied or transcendent means of expression, detached from the political reality of struggle, but rather it is considered an integral part of the ideological foundations of the new social order, personal as well as public, the language of decrees no less than of love letters. The new language, the language made from the combined forces of resistance and poetry, is still to be forged. Neither armed struggle alone, nor cultural resistance by itself, can provide the necessary resources. Poetry, furthermore, must contend not only with the outsider, the invader or aggressor, and the regressive effects of colonialism, but with the burden of its own past as well. Thus Mahmud Darwish, the Palestinian poet now living in exile, examines the twofold struggle of the resistance and its poets in his poem "The roses and the dictionary:"

> Be that as it may,
> I must . . .
> The poet must have a new toast
> And new anthems.

> Traversing a tunnel of incense
> And pepper and ancient summer,
> I carry the key to legends and ruined monuments of slaves.
> I see history an old man
> Tossing dice and gathering the stars.
>
> Be that as it may,
> I must refuse death
> Even though my legends die.
> In the rubble I rummage for light and new poetry,
> Did you realize before today, my love,
> That a letter in the dictionary is dull?
> How do they live, all these words?
> How do they grow? How do they spread?
> We still water them with the tears of memories
> And metaphors and sugar.
>
> Be that as it may,
> I must reject the roses that spring
> From a dictionary or a *diwan*.
> Roses grow on the arms of a peasant, on the fists of a laborer,
> Roses grow over the wounds of a warrior
> And on the face of a rock.[29]

Darwish's poem, suspended in the tension between the necessity and inevitability of the historical process ("Be that as it may") and his own struggle with it ("I must"), rejects the dictionary definitions and conventions provided by classical Arabic literature ("the roses that spring/from a dictionary or a *diwan*"). The poet asserts rather the new meanings that will emerge out of the popular movement of resistance, from the "arms of a peasant," the "fists of a laborer," and the "wounds of a warrior." Darwish's poetic appeal to the popular struggle enacts what Elias Khouri termed in Palestinian poetry the "approach to the popular song," pointing thereby to the "rhythmical clarity [in poetry] which is capable of playing a special role in political practice." (LM, 230)

Such a clarity, that of popular expression, is all the more necessary given the perceived inadequacy of the rhetorical pretensions of the Arabic language manipulated by demagogic

Arab leaders and the actual historical record. The failure is pointed out by Zohair Sabbagh, a Palestinian writer living in Israel. In his study of the popular, but officially suppressed, Egyptian poet, musician, and sculptor, Ahmad Fuad Negm, Sheikh Imam, and Muhammad Ali, *An Issue and Three Combatants*, Sabbagh condemns the suppression or considered neglect in the Arab world of the works of writers of the revolution, a neglect remarkable even in publications of the Left. The Palestinian critic insists on the significance of the popular acclaim which these artists continue to enjoin:

> Despite the politics of obscurity, oppression, blockade and banishment which followed the Camp David Accords in Egypt and the rest of the Arab regimes, it is clear to us that amongst the people the poems of Ahmad Fuad Negm and the songs of Sheikh Imam Aissa are widely disseminated in Egypt, in our own land and throughout the Arab world of silence.[30]

Palestinian resistance poets and their Arab colleagues are engaged in a conflict not only with Israeli occupation of the land of Palestine, but with traditional social, political, and literary codes as well. This is a struggle which a western perspective has especial, if determined, difficulty in acknowledging, but it is one which the resistance poets and the commandos insist on: it is through the internal contradictions, the conflicts and dynamics within their own social order, as well as through the military and cultural confrontation with the external forces of hegemony which oppress that order, that revolutionary movements and their people discover and manifest their historicity, concretize their demand for access to the world historical order. This failure of the west to learn the limitations of its own learning is decried by Pablo Neruda, writing in solidarity with the Nicaraguan guerrillas. The lines are taken from his "Epic:"

> The lessons were very different,
> in West Point instruction was pure:
> school never taught them
> that those who kill could be killed:
> the Yankees never learned

> how we love our poor and dear land
> how we'd defend the flags
> we'd sewn with so much pain and love.
> What they couldn't learn in Philadelphia,
> was taught in blood in Nicaragua (NR, 53)

In other words, the First World is being called upon to assume a certain responsibility – a responsibility not for others, for "the other," the "Third World," the "oriental," or however it chooses to designate the unfamiliar, but for the limitations of its own perspective.

The Palestinian Wedding

In *The Palestinian Wedding*, Abdelwahab Elmessiri has collected, translated and assembled a volume of poems representing some of the major speakers of poetry who have emerged from the movement of Palestinian resistance to aggression, displacement and dispossession on the part of Israel and the western powers of Imperialism. Like *Nicaragua in Revolution: The Poets Speak* in which the Sandinista revolution is narrated through the writings of its poets, this volume commemorates a historical moment in a national struggle which must in the end discover its significance in the larger confrontation with the forces of repression, both political and cultural, throughout the modern world. It is in reference to this broader context that the poems collected in the volume have been ordered and arranged. The anthology, which is divided into six sections, beginning with "Aesthetics of the revolution," followed by "Elegies," "Love of Palestine," "Steadfastness," "Resistance," and culminating finally in "Victory", contains within its arrangement an implicit narrative, a narrative whose argument is explicitly articulated in Elmessiri's critical introduction to the collection.

> Those who tend, consciously or unconsciously, to think of Palestine only with reference to Zionism view its history as a mere reaction to Zionist settler colonialism. While it is true that the Zionist settlement in Palestine has had a profound and probably lasting impact on Palestinian society, it is also important to

remember that Palestine, first and foremost, is part of a wide
Arab cultural and national formation. Similarly Zionism and
the Zionist state itself should be seen as a manifestation of a
distinct social and cultural formation, namely, that of nine
teenth century Europe with its imperialist onslaught on Africa
and Asia and a world outlook assuming rather sharp distinc
tions between the races. . . . Palestine, and consequently Pales
tinian poetry, part of a complex cultural configuration, should
therefore be seen in a broad pan-Arab context, rather than in
the narrow and rather constricted perspective of Zionist settle
colonialism.

(PW, 1

Because it is a collection of many poems, by many differen
poets, and because these poems are furthermore assorted and
significantly organized into something more than an anthology
The Palestinian Wedding – and here it differs from *Nicaragua i
Revolution* or *Thunder from the Mountains* which record an already
achieved historical moment – combines at once, in a tense juxta
position, the transcendence of the symbol with the immanence o
narrative. In "On the trunk of an olive tree," Tawfiq Zayyad, the
former mayor of Nazareth, removed from his position by the
Israeli authorities, and an elected member of Raqah, the Israel
Communist Party, in the Knesset, composes the lines:

I shall carve the number of each deed
Of our usurped land,
The location of my village and its boundaries,

. . . .

All the chapters of my tragedy,
And all the stages of the disaster,
From beginning
To end,
On the olive tree
In the courtyard
Of the house.

(PW, 55–9

In their struggle with the assaults of history, however, the poet
carve not only commemorative verses into the symbols o

Palestine, but proceed like the "flock of canaries" in Salma al-Jayyusi's poem "Dearest love II,"

straying away in flight,
Cutting its path;
Away from old roads, straying away,
Cutting a path.

(PW, 79–81)

Palestinian literature, like the literatures of other cultures marginalized within the dominant version of world history, by virtue of its current historical situation and determination, is liable to uncritical consideration and identification, fated either to rejection or admission for the very fact of its being "Palestinian." Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, head of the English department at Birzeit University in the Occupied West Bank, in an article on "The contemporary Palestinian poetry of occupation," signals the danger that threatens to abort the literary history of Palestine.

It has become almost imperative for any study of this nature to offer a literary "apology" or "defence" in an attempt to justify any shortcomings or literary defects in the subject at hand. After all, the literature is "Palestinian," and unfortunately this national definition has become the rationalization for the lack of any objective study or criticism of the literature which is in itself a source of national pride, a symbol as well as a means of resistance.

Ashrawi goes on to call for a

ruthless scrutiny of a field that has long been denied its rights to responsible criticism, like a child or a mentally disturbed person who is not held responsible for his actions. Our literature has the right to demand of its critics responsible analysis and evaluation combined with the essential intellectual integrity that other literatures of the world have "enjoyed."

At the same time, however, the critic insists that

This is not to say that objectivity means a disregard of the conditions – social, political and cultural – within which this

literature was born and is still growing. Nor does it mean a patronizing condescension to a literature of a developing nation on the basis of the logical fallacy that an underdeveloped nation has a literary output which in itself parallels this underdevelopment. Rather through a study of the objective conditions one can come to a better understanding of – and not an apology for – the literary works of the people who are living in these conditions. The Palestinians have been able to meet many challenges in their struggle for existence and the challenge of an honest and constructive criticism is a mere footnote in their long and arduous struggle.[31]

The challenge is formulated in the poems themselves. Like Mahmud Darwish, who finds that he "must reject the roses that spring/From a dictionary or a *diwan*," the poet, according to Samih al-Qassim, must "dip into the depths of the virgin well," and in so doing he warns of the "Woe to the tumbling ivory towers,/And to the captives of the mimics." ("To Najib Mahfuz") Such are the "Aesthetics of the revolution" as presented among the poems contained in the first section of the volume and which announce the meaninglessness of conventional meanings. In their rejection of conventional meanings and the covenanted interpretations of history, the poets of the Palestinian resistance movement also reformulate the chronicles of events. The massacres of Dayr Yassin and Kafr Qassim, the disaster of 1948, the defeat of June 1967, which serve as nodal points within the poetic configurations and commemorate significant events in recent Palestinian history, betray as well an elegiac nostalgia for the idylls of a time past. Jabra Jabra, in "The mouth of the well," remembers Dayr Yassin and the "Mouth of the well,/Where the hands of playful maidens/Met in friendship, pouring/Spring water into the jugs/Amidst merriment and song." For Rashid Husayn, "Jaffa's heart is silent, locked in stone,/And through the streets of heaven passes the funeral of the moon." ("Jaffa") Mahmud Darwish recalls Kafr Qassim, where "Once the olive trees were green," at a time before "They stopped the workers' trucks at the curve of the road." ("Victim number 18") In commemorating the day of Zionist occupation, Fadwa Tuqan asks "Can it be true that in the season of harvest,/Grain and fruit have

turned to ashes?" ("My sad city") Tawfiq Sayigh addresses Palestine, the land itself: "Is it true that you were young,/And that your wavy hips/Caused seduction among young men?" ("A national hymn")

In poetizing the June War of 1967, however, Salma al-Jayyusi, turning away from this effort to recuperate the past symbolically, writes that "June extends to her a bridge/As though June were a new book, erasing all books before." ("Dearest love II") These commemorative evocations of a past lost to the present, that is, contain more than the nostalgic laments of destitution. They participate in a re-creation of historical significance. As the narrator of an early story by Ghassan Kanafani, "The owl in a distant room," recalls,

> I don't know what day the incident occurred. Even my father has forgotten, as if the ill-omened day were greater than any name or number could accommodate. It was in itself a sign of the time cast into the course of history, and thus people would say, "That happened a month after the day of the massacre."[32]

Following the section entitled "Elegies" in which these poems of commemoration are placed are the poems grouped under the heading "Love of Palestine." In the section "Steadfastness" (*sumūd*), Mahmud Darwish elaborates, in the two poems "My father" and "Awaiting the return," a classical allusion to the Homeric epic of the *Odyssey*, transforming the Greek legend in such a way that it is now Telemachus, the son who has remained behind, who becomes the hero, and not the wandering Odysseus. "Once upon a dream . . . once upon a death," the same poet writes in "Blessed be that which has not come," the longest of the poems which appear in the next section entitled "Resistance." It is from this poem too that the anthology takes its title:

> This is the wedding without an end,
> In a boundless courtyard,
> This is the Palestinian wedding:
> Never will lover reach lover
> Except as martyr . . . or fugitive.
> – What year did this grief begin?
> – It started in that Palestinian year without end. (PW, 201–3)

The final section, entitled "Victory," contains but two poems, the bleak promise of a future still in the making, a future to which the poetry nonetheless contributes its critical share.

The Palestinian Wedding is dedicated to Ghassan Kanafani, who first distinguished the Palestinian poetry being written in Occupied Palestine as "resistance poetry," an attention and recognition acknowledged by Mahmud Darwish in his introduction to a volume of Kanafani's literary critical studies:

> It was Ghassan Kanafani who directed Arab public opinion to the literature of the occupied land. Whatever the exaggerations and imbalance, these are a matter for those who study the material presented by Ghassan, but the term "resistance" was not associated with the poetry until Ghassan applied it, thereby giving the term its special significance.[33]

The ideological exigencies of this poetry, its contemporary urgency and the demands it makes on the conventions of poetics, pose special, indeed perhaps crucial, problems for the literary critic, problems admitted by Kanafani in his own literary study of the "Poetry of resistance in Occupied Palestine 1948–1966:" "There is no academic objectivity to this research. If anything, the study lacks in 'cold objectivity.'" Kanafani, the critic, then goes on to maintain:

> There are those who can bring to a given topic a completely critical capacity. This is not the case for us, however, who are a part of the very question of resistance. Furthermore, the objective conditions inside the occupied land within which this literature developed are so exceptional and uncommon that they do not yield to measured judgements. (LROP, 12)

Like Hanan Ashrawi after him, Kanafani called here for a criticism that would be equal to the poetry, a criticism which must account not only for the poetic values in the verse but for its historical relevance as well, come to terms not only with its ideological persuasion but with its literary significance also, and with the dynamic impetus of the poetry's engagement, at once immediate and symbolically mediated, with a historical reality.

Palestinian poetry, no less than the Palestinian people themselves, is being challenged by the current of events. In the poem "My father" published by Mahmud Darwish in 1966 while he was still living in Israel, the poet had revelled in the steadfastness of a Telemachus:

> My father once said:
> He who has no homeland
> Has no grave on earth;
>
> . . . .And forbade me to leave! (PW, 149)

Sixteen years later, the same poet saw in the departure of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian fedayeen from Beirut, following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the summer-long siege of that city, the image of Odysseus leaving the windy city for long trials on the Mediterranean waters after the war with the Trojans: "The Palestinian is a new Ulysses, wandering from the Phoenician coast to the Greek shore, and no Arab port to receive him."[34] The poets have responded and continue to respond to the events of the year 1982. Although it is premature to suggest a new anthology in the making, the poems themselves propose new parameters and directions emerging from within the corpus of Palestinian resistance poetry. Mahmud Darwish and Mu'in Basisu, for example, composed together the long poem "Participation from within the siege: letter to an Israeli soldier." Walid al-Halis, the young poet from Gaza, two weeks after the invasion, wrote a poem, entitled simply "Siege" (*al-Hisar*). Dayr Yassin, Kafr Qassim, 1948, 1967, 1982, Sabra and Shatila are crises that punctuate the historical record. Samih al-Qassim composed "Qatr al-nadi" and wrote there "because your passion reminds him of a language that languages have forgotten." Mahmud Darwish's long "Poem in praise of the tall shadow" appeared in the Lebanese newspaper *al-Safir*.

For the poets of the Palestinian resistance, however, the situation looms critical, warranting a rethinking of poetry's role and relevance in the struggle.[35] In an interview given in Spain where

he was attending a conference on literature, Mahmud Darwish responded to his interlocutor's questions:

> I may be a poet, but the tragedy and the amount of Palestinian blood which has been shed is greater by far than any poem can express or even comprehend. The "final act" of Beirut, the slaughter of the Palestinians, it was television that was the quickest and most effective means, more so than poetry, of recording this. It was television that brought the crime into every home, to such an extent that every European actually felt that the crime was being committed in his own bedroom. What I mean to say here is that the Palestinian tragedy is larger than language, any language, even though there are poets who maintain that the Palestinian poet participates in joining the Palestinian issue with the issue of freedom for the Arab.[36]

The poetry of the Palestinian resistance has long challenged the conventions of criticism and thus it is that there too the critics, no less than the poets, feel the crisis. Elias Khouri, upon his return to Beirut in the fall of 1982, wrote in the newspaper *al-Nada'*:

> The critical priority as I understand it is the attempt to situate the literary text in its temporal context. . . . How do you write criticism in a time of upheaval like the Arab time in Lebanon? This very upheaval is what gives to criticism a new significance, a meaning of search and acceptance of temporal emptiness and the disintegration of standards of measurement.
> (November, 1982)

A new corpus

The resistance poets in El Salvador, Palestine, Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa, from Baluchistan to Nicaragua, acclaim and herald the possibilities inherent in the separate and collective liberation struggles for transforming the historical record. What Russell Hamilton referred to as the "mnemonic function" of Mozambican poetry, or the "archival" feature of Mau Mau patriotic songs which is crucial to Maina wa Kinyatti's anthology *Thunder from the Mountains*, is theorized by the poets and critics as

integral to the stratagems of resistance poetry. Ernesto Cardenal has described a critical dimension of his own poetic project as *exteriorismo*, providing, that is, a documentary account of the daily historical and historic details, events, and actors of the revolutionary struggle. This *exteriorismo* of Central American poetry finds an important analogue in what Elias Khouri indicates in Palestinian literature as "documentary or realistic poetry," *shi'r waqi'i*. (LM, 251) Together with a new chronology, a new solidarity of popular heroes is emerging out of the poetry of resistance, produced by the resistance struggle and claiming a history of its own. Thus, Octavio Robleto, a Nicaraguan poet, writes in his "Elegy for the guerrilla fighter,"

> The truth is, we knew so little about you:
> a shy kid, a student who wrote poems,
> and of your poetry what's known is even less!
>
> But word of you, your grip on us,
> will grow
> And your words will spread
> like grain in fertile ground.
> (NR, 193)

And Tomas Borge, one of the founders of the FSLN, will be the occasion in "To Tomas Borge: gone, ceased to be a dream" for Francisco de Asis Fernandez for

> reinventing
> the least and sweetest meanings of the door,
> of the table, of bread,
> raising a clenched fist of unforgettable words:
> Monimbo, Matagalpa, Subtiava, Esteli,
> brother.
> (NR, 271)

From out of the fragments of Neruda's "body divided," a history interrupted, a culture disrupted, another literary corpus is in the process of constituting itself. The resistance poems are an important part of such a corpus, part of the Third World's challenge to the propagation of western literary conventions negotiated within and between the academies of the United States and Europe. That corpus is characterized by Victor Jara, the Chilean

poet, composer, and singer, who was active not only in the New Chilean Song Movement but in Salvador Allende's Popular Unity campaign as well:

> The cultural invasion is like a leafy tree which prevents us from seeing our own sun, sky and stars. Therefore in order to be able to see the sky above our heads, our task is to cut this tree off at the roots. US imperialism understands very well the magic of communication through music and persists in filling our young people with all sorts of commercial tripe. With professional expertise they have taken certain measures: first, the commercialisation of so-called "protest music"; second, the creation of "idols" of protest music who obey the same rules and suffer the same constraints as the other idols of the consumer music industry – they last a little while and then disappear. Meanwhile they are useful in neutralising the innate spirit of rebellion of young people. The term "protest song" is no longer valid because it is ambiguous and has been misused. I prefer the term "revolutionary song".[37]

Victor Jara was tortured to death in Santiago's National Stadium following the CIA-assisted military coup in September 1973 which assassinated Allende and overthrew his Popular Unity government. Jara's songs, like those of other resistance poets, continue to animate the resistance struggles and national liberation movements. As the Mozambican poet Mutimati Barnabé João wrote in his epic poem "I, the people," published by FRELIMO after independence in 1975:

> I know that I can't think in just one language. (SH, 104)

iii

Narratives of resistance

> Without a drop of blood
> the long roads would be featureless.
>
> Mahmud Darwish – "The bottom of the town"

"Apocalypse at Solentiname:" historical consequences

In his short story "Apocalypse at Solentiname,"[1] written in 1976, the Argentinian writer Julio Cortazar recounts his visit, in the company of other Latin American writers, to the peasant community of Solentiname established by Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal, a priest, a poet, and a member of the FSLN. Solentiname was founded as a contemplative society, modeled along the lines of Thomas Merton's Trappist community in Gethsemane, Kentucky, where Cardenal had once spent several years, and the Nicaraguan village had become famous not only for the dynamic and revolutionary practice of its religion but for the artistic productions of the peasants, paintings illustrating the gospels and their own lives.[2] As a short story, "Apocalypse at Solentiname" differs from the literary standards conventionally applied to works of fiction and stands rather as a documentary challenge to those very standards. These criteria and conventions are adumbrated in the opening paragraph of the text, only to be subverted by subsequent developments in the narrative and the unfolding within

RESISTANCE LITERATURE

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Methuen
New York and London

First published in 1987 by
Methuen, Inc.
29 West 35th Street, New York NY 10001

Published in Great Britain by
Methuen & Co.
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

© 1987 Barbara Harlow

Typeset in Great Britain by
Scarborough Typesetting Services
and printed by
Richard Clay, Bungay, Suffolk

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Harlow, Barbara.
Resistance literature.
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
1. Literature and revolutions. 2. Developing countries – Literatures – Political aspects. 3. Revolutionary literature – History and criticism. 4. National liberation movements – Developing countries.
I. Title.
PN51.H375 1986 809'.93358 86–31149
ISBN 0–4163–9950–9
ISBN 0–4163–9960–6 (pbk.)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Harlow, Barbara.
Resistance literature.
1. Imperialism in literature. 2. Developing countries – Literatures – History and criticism.
I. Title.
809'.93358 PN849.U43
ISBN 0–416–39950–9
ISBN 0–416–39960–6 (pbk.)

for my mother and father
Lucille and Francis Foley