
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Olive Symbolism in Palestinian and Spanish Poetry: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study aims at highlighting the symbolism of the olive tree in Palestinian and Spanish poetry. Since the olive tree is elemental in both cultures, the study attempts to tackle four main themes of such a dominant tree: resistance, peace, eternity, and homeland. In order to conduct the study, a number of poems employing the olive tree are investigated and analyzed in order to highlight the closeness between the Palestinian and the Spanish cultures. The study tries to prove the matchfulness between the symbolism of the olive tree in both poetries. The selection of the poems is based on the common ground of the olive tree symbolism in Palestine and Spain. The only theme in which the poetry in the two cultures does not completely coincide is resistance. In Palestinian poetry, the olive is used to signify resistance against occupation, while this tree is employed to denote the resistance to socioeconomic classism, urban sprawl, and natural disasters. In order to make an outstanding comparison in the three other themes, the author selected poems of both cultures where the olive tree signifies international symbolizations.

KEYWORDS

Spanish poetry, Palestinian poetry, olive tree, symbolism.

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1. Introduction

In this article, a comparative study is made about the employment of the olive tree as a poetic symbol in Palestinian and Spanish poetry. The use of natural elements in poetry reflects the strong relationship between humans and nature. Universally, the olive tree or its branch symbolizes peace and friendship that dates back to ancient Greek mythology. Another symbolization of the olive tree is rootedness, as shown in different cultures and religions. To add, triumph and glory are the other two symbols of the olive branch, as a tradition in the Greek era, where the winner in the competitions was crowned by olive leaves (Petruccelli & Bartolini, 2002). Since olive trees are known to live thousands of years, they gain longevity as another source of symbolism. Further symbolism of olive trees is concerned with hope, which stems from religion, as shown in the story of the prophet Noah. In this story, Noah spent forty days and forty nights on the floating ark. When the ark settled on the mountain, he sent a dove, and it returned with an olive branch as a sign of the salvation of mankind (Adams, 2015). Since then, the olive branch has been used worldwide as a symbol of hope.

In Arabic and Spanish cultures, the olive tree is linked with legend, religion, and tradition. This tree is mentioned in the Bible and the Qur'an as two main resources of the Arabic and Spanish cultures. The olive tree is known as Mediterranean in both regions, Palestine and Spain. It has a strong presence in the poetry of these two countries. Romans brought the olives to Palestine and Spain and used the branches as a sign of peace, reconciliation and pacification; Harris and Kallis (2007, p. 12) maintain that,

Olive branches have always been a sign of peace, reconciliation and pacification. In human history, the olive is associated with the noblest acts of society and with tender images; simple yet imposing. They have been used to honor heroes, exalt the virtues of great men, reward excellence in fine arts and symbolize peace. The olive tree has thus been related to the most noble and honorable feelings of human being.

2. Nature Symbolism in Poetry.

Symbolism, in general, is a sign or an object which is used to represent something else (Mligo & Mwenisongole, 2018). In poetry, it is used to represent ideas and qualities through language. It is vividly present in poetry, and poets employ it to express their ideas, feelings, and emotions toward nature (Vale, Mlambo & Krishnamurthy, 2022).

The linguistic rendition of natural symbols in poetry assists the poet in expressing his ideas easily and supports his argument. The poet, as a symbol maker, employs natural elements to explicitly convey a meaning that he has in mind. In poetry, all natural symbols are used to transfer human thoughts. Poets found in nature a source of elements to compose their literature in a poetic form. Therefore, it helps poets to express their own ideas innately, even when it seems to be new or strange to their societies (Piper, 1987).

Poets do not usually refer to natural elements in their poetry for decorative purposes but for psychological and emotional ones. For symbolism, they resort to many natural elements such as the moon, the sun, flora and fauna. The olive tree, which is a natural symbol, has been widely used in poetry since earlier civilizations to designate strength, eternity, homeland, and peace. It was used in Greek poetry and particularly by Homer in his *Odyssey* to symbolize peace and life. This bond between the olive tree and Greece is certified by the legend, which indicates that Athena struck the rock with her spear, giving birth to the first olive tree (Grego, 2022). Olive branches were given to athletes who had been ranked high in the Olympics in Roman times. In modern times, olive branches are used on flags and slogans of international organizations such as the United Nations (Kucukomurler, 2011).

3. Olive Tree Symbolism in Palestinian and Spanish Poetry

Palestinian poets are considered the most popular Arab poets who use the olive tree abundantly in their works. In their poetry, they cry about the loss of their homeland, Palestine. The theme of identity and connectedness to the homeland is very recurrent in their poetry, and the relation between land and identity is intermixed in their poetry. The Palestinian poets are always intimately connected with their occupied homeland. For example, Darwish, the most famous Palestinian poet, makes every poem he writes – including the love ones – a poem to his beloved homeland, Palestine (Cohen-Mor, 2019). Palestinian poets have lost their homeland since their birth and have turned into refugees (Abu Eid, 2016). So, the landscape of their homeland, with all its flora, fauna, water and soil, is engraved in their memory.

The Olive tree is a very recurrent motif in Palestinian poetry. It holds many meanings, such as resistance, peace, eternity, and homeland. Its green color is related to rebirth and fertility, and in many places in their poetry, it is related to the history of the human being. Another symbol of the olive tree is its sacredness, as it is mentioned in the three celestial books (Hamzah, 2012). One can safely confirm that reference is made to the olive tree in most Palestinian poems.

The relationship between Palestinian poets and the olive tree springs from its widespread in their homeland. The Spanish poets are no different as a similar relationship is established between the poets as human beings and the olive tree as a natural element. Spain is considered one of the main homelands of olive trees in Europe. Most of the poets considered in this study were born in Andalusia, which is very famous for its olive groves. As such, the strong and inseparable relationship between the Palestinian and Spanish poets stems from the place of childhood and deep memories in their homeland.

3.1. Resistance

Military resistance is always accompanied by cultural resistance, and one main component of cultural resistance is literature resistance. Literature resistance is defined by Harlow (1987) as a political activity which is involved in a struggle against descendent forms of ideological and cultural production. Poetry of resistance is part of this literature.

Poetry has many themes; lyrical, epical, romantic, and social, depending on the social status of the country where the poetry of resistance is born. Poets, contending other artistic fields such as theater, music, dance, and painting, assume that their artistic profession, poetry, is to be involved in the events that cloud the homeland. Poetry is normally calling for social justice in the same society, and it also calls for resisting colonization. Converting poetry into a resistance manifestation is due to its close relation to the daily life of its society. Through their poetry and their involvement in the resistance, poets make visible the damages that their lands suffer from occupation, war, social classism and destruction. Poetry, as a resistance movement, becomes the voice of the oppressed people and makes their suffer visible.

Poets normally use certain elements from their surroundings as symbols of resistance. The olive tree is one of the most used symbols to show resistance in Palestinian and Spanish poetry. This tree is widely planted and grown in Spain and Palestine. So, choosing the olive tree to symbolize the steadfastness and rootedness of the land in Spanish and Palestinian poetry is dominant. Collins (2011) maintains that the olive tree is one of the most important symbols of resistance in Palestinian culture. According to him, it is “sprinkled throughout their poetry and nationalist iconography as a figure of interiority, home and the abiding link

between generations" (p. 110). Likewise, the tree has gained a distinguished position in Spanish culture too. Olive tree has turned into an essential element in Spanish poetry besides bulls and flamenco dancers (Mayhew, 2009).

In Spanish poetry, the olive tree is frequently used as a symbol of resistance, especially in the Spanish Civil War. Many groves of olives were abandoned in Spain, resisting the harsh conditions and waiting for the return of their owners. In Palestine, due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the olive tree is threatened to uproot, and its owners become unable to reach the groves to take care of them. According to Hammad (2011), this transformed the olive tree and the cultural spaces for human engagement that revolved around it into an entity and symbol that was imbued with strong emotions.

In his poem *The second olive tree*, Darwish expresses the resistance of the olive against the invaders who wanted to uproot it. The tree is pictured as the hill's modest lady who resists and challenges the storm without allowing its leaves to fall. Darwish is making an exceptional comparison between the olive tree and the lady in protecting their honor. In the poem, the storm symbolizes the colonizers who don't respect this olive tree which represents Palestinian revered grandmothers that live eternally.

The olive tree does not weep and does not laugh. The olive tree
Is the hillside's, modest lady. Shadow
Covers her one leg, and she will not take her leaves off in front of the storm.
Standing, she is seated, and seated, standing.
She lives as a friendly sister of eternity, neighbor of time
That helps her stock her luminous oil and
Forget the invaders' names, except the Romans,
who Coexisted with her and borrowed some of her branches To weave wreaths.
They did not treat her as a prisoner of war but as a venerable grandmother,
before whose calm dignity swords shatter (Darwish, 2009, p. 107)

Another Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Awad Abbas, portrays the Palestinian resistance and compares it in the same manner that the olive tree encounters natural disasters such as hurricanes, storms and floods. Although natural disasters may succeed in affecting the upper part of the olive tree, these disasters definitely fail to destroy even the least of the lower parts of the tree, as such parts are deeply rooted in the soil.

Hurricane, storms,
And floods break the branches
Of trees.
Ropes of earthworm
Trim the leaves of youthful olive trees
But the roots of the olive
Return and stretch in the depth
Of the soil...
Roots of olive, you have become the model
And man is competing, imitating your root,
Olive of the land. (Abbas, p. 88-89)

Olive is the dominant symbol of resistance in Palestinian culture in general and poetry in particular. Nowadays, and as a reaction to the occupation, Palestinians are mainly planting olives as a model of resistance. To quote Hamdi (2022, 189)

Israel's geographical and ecological violence should be seen in tandem with its brutal psychological and physical violence against the Palestinian population. (...) Thus, planting olive trees has become an act of resistance and staying rooted in this land (...), and Palestinian farmers are using farming as a form of resistance

This picture of the resisting olive tree is strongly present in Spanish poetry against urbanization, socioeconomic classism, and exploitation of low class people. The olive tree has a special connection with the Spanish identity, as it is ancestrally inherited in poetry.

In his poem, *Querencia del olivo* (Love of the olive), Casares expresses the resistance of the olive tree against those who want to uproot it and deforest the land. He has chosen the olive tree and has prioritized this tree over others as a symbol of natural elements' resistance. This is clear in the following stanza, which shows the cry of the tree and its attempt to let all know about its infinite pain.

I would like to always look at the solitude of the mountain,
the bottomless beauty of the horizon sea,
the land that welcomes me, beautiful as a verse.
And raise my branches to the sky like a cry,
in order to proclaim my infinite pain,
when they want to cut me, to the whole universe (Casares, *Querencia del olivo*)*¹

Blas de Otero is another poet who explicitly illustrates the resistance and the struggle of the olive tree. He also demonstrates how this tree has called to resist any danger that can threaten the land. The olive tree is ready to defend the land because it can live for a long time; this has made it worth being given the honor of having the protector of the land as a title.

Olive bouquet, come on
to green the air,
let everything be bouquets
olive trees in the air
we will defend the land
red we watch
let everything be bouquets
olive trees in the air
Standing in peace,
United, we work (De Otero, 1985, p. 109)*

Freedom as an aspiration of resistance is manifest in Spanish poetry. In the poem *La Libertad* (Freedom) by Maria Jesus Barquero Casas, the poetess is presenting the olive tree's struggle for the freedom of others, despite the suffering and the hardships.

Freedom
is to give life
for others.
And how it hurts!
the olive trees of the mountain
they still struggle.(Barquero Casas, 1992, p. 48)*

In the same manner, Miguel Hernández directed his speech to the poor olive harvesters of Jaen, telling them that they would not be slaves because they were the true land owners of the groves of olive. The title of his poem is *Aceituneros* (the olive harvesters) which is the profession of most of the population of Jaén. Hernández is using the olives as a symbol of resistance to the exploiters in a period marked by social inequality, especially in Andalucía. The poem was composed during the period of social division in Spain, where people were divided into an upper class and simple workers, having too many discrepancies between the two classes. The upper class, according to him, takes advantage of the workers and exploits them.

Jaén, get up brave
on your moonstones,
do not go to be a slave
with all your olive groves
inside the clarity
of the oil and its aromas,
indicate your freedom
the freedom of your hills (Hernández, 2001, p. 175)

3.2. Peace

Olive tree branches as a symbol of peace date back to ancient Greek mythology. It was created in a competition between Athena and Poseidon for mastery over an important seaport. It was used as a symbol of the goddess *Pax* (Peace in Latin), under whose name messengers and individuals often requested asylum (Grimassi, 2000). The olive tree is a holy tree which has a sacred iconography in all celestial religions. In Christianity, the olive's branch has been associated with peace, hope and renewal of life

¹ The poetry translations marked with (*) is the authors translation.

since the time of the prophet Noah. From his ark, he sent a dove after the deluge, seeking any sign of life. Then the dove returned with an olive branch as a symbol of God's reconciliation with humans (Roberts, 2013). Since then, the dove with an olive branch in its mouth has been a universal symbol of peace.

The olive tree is universally a symbol of peace. In Islam and Christianity faiths, this tree is sacred and is mentioned in the Qur'an and the Bible. The Mount of Olives is the place where the Garden Gethsemane (literally: The press for olive oil) is located. The Garden Gethsemane is sacred, and Jesus prayed on it the night before he was arrested. This grove of olives is a peaceful place, and Jesus used to meet his disciples in it. In addition, olive oil in Christianity is used for anointment in many sacred rituals and ceremonies, such as baptism (Firenze, 2011). Likewise, the olive tree is attributed to sacredness, blessedness and holiness in Islam. It is mentioned seven times in the Quran, and the prophet Mohammad recommended Muslims to eat its oil and massage it over their bodies since it is produced from a holy tree (Said & Saad, 2011).

In his poem, *the second Olive Tree*, Darwish confirms that the green-silver color of the olive trees is the official color of peace. It is a guide that teaches humans to be caring and humble, rejecting any type of violence or tyranny. Olive Tree re-educates soldiers, who were trained to be a destruction machine and an arm of oppression. The olive tree is presented by Darwish as a peaceful mother who treats soldiers as sons, as shown in the following stanza.

In her reticent silver-green
Color hesitates to say what it thinks, and to look at what is behind
The portrait, for the olive tree, is neither green nor silver.
The olive tree is the color of peace; if peace needed
A color. No one says to the olive tree: How beautiful you are!
But: How noble and how splendid! And she,
She who teaches soldiers to lay down their rifles
And re-educates them in tenderness and humility (Darwish, 2009, p. 107)

Samih Al-Qasim, another famous Palestinian poet, intertwines olive with peace. As shown in the following verses, the poet is highlighting the universal symbolism of the olive branch as a symbol of peace. In the sacredness of this symbolism which is religiously related, the poet revisits the story of Noah and mentions the Angel Gabriel, who was the messenger of Allah to the prophet Mohammad.

Today I become a dove
that holds a branch of olive and flies
In the lands of God...
As the Angel Gabriel...
a messenger of peace (Al-Qasim, 1987, p. 516)*

In Spanish poetry, the olive tree is employed in the same style that Darwish and Al-Qasim did. The use of this tree as a label of peace is omnipresent in Spanish poetry. As mentioned above, this relationship between the olive tree and peace goes back to ancient cultures and religions. Peace as an antonym of war is shown in the poem *El Olivo* (The olive tree) by De Escalante, who declares the olive tree as a symbol of peace that the war delimits and from its oil comes the light to illuminate the day. The light that comes from the olive oil extends the day and lightens it. The olive tree unites the lands; its oil is the source of peaceful light that makes darkness fade.

peace in my branches that the war delimits,
light in my fruits that dilates the day (De Escalante & Pelayo, 1956, p. 24)*

Peace is a requirement of tranquility and stability and a provider of these qualities to humans. Humans cannot do anything in their lives or practice their daily life without peace. Reading as the human practice is done in the olives' groves. In his poem, *La primavera ha venido* (The spring has come), Rafael Alberti insists that peace is an elemental quality in human life. He has chosen the olive tree to be the key symbol of such elemental requirements of daily human life.

spring has come
leaving in the olive grove
a book in each nest.
Live reading, reading
while peace in the world

don't die on us.
Peace, peace, peace to read
an open book at dawn
and another at sunset (Alberti, 1998, p. 41)*

Rafael Garcia, in his *Soneto* (Sonnet), shows that the Spanish countryside is rich in groves of olive trees that add delight to the lands. The olive branch, which the dove came with to Noah, brought hope, and it was the salvation of all creatures on the ark. The olive branch has been particularly selected for its sacredness in religions and mythologies. That has made people in favor of such a branch representing peace.

Olive tree of peace and oil,
(green branch and homing pigeon)
under a golden spring sun,
That from the Spanish countryside you are delight.
(...)
Olive tree of Noah and his offspring
forming on this earth the chain
with biblical links of light (Garcia, 1982, p. 61)*

Lazaro Gallego, in his poem *Breviario del Olivo* (Breviary of the Olive), expresses his love and his connectedness to the olive and justifies this adoration because of his hatred against war. In the title of this poem, the sacred position that the olive tree occupies is clearly seen. Gallego composes this poem as a prayer to the olive tree, which is considered as a God.

I embrace your noble and strong trunk,
caress in your green-black sap.
Because I was always an inveterate lover
of peace and love, - not of war -,
the sign that you day by day
you rightly proclaim to the open branch,
the sign that betrays you lucky
the name you bear at court (Gallego, *Breviario del Olivo*)*

3.3 Eternity

The olive tree is one of the oldest trees on earth. It is considered an emblem of eternity, immortality and rebirth because of its existence over centuries. Olive trees stand for enduring times, and their groves are considered by many poets as eternal and everlasting. The trunks of these trees show their age and their rootedness in the earth.

Olive trees can cope with different climates. According to Angus (2014), they can resist natural disasters as well as human attacks. Angus states that the olive can survive fires and the axes of humans. According to him, it is believed that the tree can live thousands of years. To quote his words, "Because new olive trees can grow from ancient roots, a tree could be even older, leading some to call it "the tree of eternity" (p. 19).

In his poem dedicated to olives, *the second olive tree*, Darwish shows how the uprooted olive tree by the colonizer does not die. It will regrow, and the Palestinian martyrs who die and are buried beside such a tree will live again and prosper like that tree. The blood of the martyrs is the water that irrigates the olive tree; every martyr killed for the sake of the land will grow as a new olive tree, but a thorny one this time to resist the occupants of the land.

After the victorious soldiers
Had gone on their way, we buried him there, in that deep
Pit – the grandmother's cradle. And that is why we were
Sure that he would become, in a little while, an olive
Tree – a thorny olive tree – and green! (Darwish, 2009, p. 107)

In another poem, Darwish insists on using the olive as a motif of eternity and rebirth, as shown in the verses above. In the following verses, Darwish insists that the olive tree never dies, and even if it dies, it is green, and life flows and emanates from its branches.

While he was writing some poetries
Olive tree will get its green nature again

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

According to Darwish, there is an inseparable relationship between the Palestinians' blood and the olive tree. In *The Earth is Closing on Us*, Darwish pictures the olive tree as a continuity to humans. The nationalist Darwish in this poem is expressing angrily and despairingly the suffering of the Palestinians with the colonizer of the land. In spite of their death, they will be rebirthed in the form of an olive tree that eternalizes them. Darwish wants to eternalize the martyrs by linking them with the olive tree that eternally lives.

We will die here, here in the last passage.
Here and here, our blood will plant its olive tree (Darwish, 2005, p.13)

Similar to Darwish, Tawfik Zayyad, in his poem, *On the Trunk of an Olive Tree*, eternalizes the Palestinian tragedy by carving all the details in the trunk of an olive tree. The choice of the olive tree has come from the complete conviction of the eternity and longevity of this tree. The poet wants others to remember the Palestinian tragedy and disaster of the occupation. Even though he wants to carve all details on the trunk of the olive tree, he wants even to eternalize all uprooted trees on that trunk. The olive trees are like an eternal book that keeps and preserves all details about the Palestinians and their lands between its extreme covers. That would enable all future generations to know about their ancestors' past.

I shall carve the number of each deed
Of our usurped land
The location of my village and its boundaries.
The demolished houses of its peoples,
My uprooted trees,
And to remember it all,
I shall continue to carve
All the chapters of my tragedy,
And all the stages of the disaster,
From the beginning
To end, (Zayyad, 1982, p. 52)

As for Spanish poetry, the use of the olive tree as an emblem of eternity and rebirth can be clearly noticed in many poems. To illustrate this viewpoint, three Spanish poets are selected. Antonio Casares, in his poem titled *Querencia del olivo* (Love of the olive) expresses his desire to live eternally like the olive tree. The tree is depicted as a god to confirm its eternity and immortality.

I would like to always be like you, old olive tree,
upright under the blue sky of Andalusia,
like a god who feels eternally alive,
herald of a land that announces joy (Casares, *Querencia del olivo*)

Alberti in his *Que es iun olivo?* (What is an olive?) provides us with an answer to this title question. According to his answer, the olive tree is as old as man himself on earth and as young as a young boy. This tree has no end, it is rooted deep in the earth, and it coexisted with man since his first steps on earth.

What is an olive tree?
an olive tree
It's an old, old, old
and it's a boy
with a branch in front
and hung at the waist
a little bag all full
of olives (Alberti, 1978, p. 34)*

In the same manner, Amos de Escalante combines the olive tree with its sacredness in Christianity. Jesus was arrested by Romans in an olive grove on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. In the olive grove, the suffering of Jesus started (Tyndale 2017, 1161). De Escalante portrays the grief of the olive tree on the crucifixion of Jesus. This privilege of having Jesus among the olive trees makes them the only eternal ones among all other trees.

See my sad leaves, and its

bright hue is off, since I lay
and anguished Jesus left in the garden
my trunk bathed in blood and sweat.

More of the holy dew penetrated
to eternal life in a newly awakened being
and when the field pales dead
I am crowned with perennial greenery (De Escalante & Pelayo, 1956, p. 24) *

Olives are eternal, according to poets, who took this attribute from their cultures. In the Palestinian and Spanish cultures, the olive tree is considered eternal as it grows, even if it dies. This attribute of eternity through the resurrection and having an enduring life is clearly seen in Palestinian and Spanish poetry above. As mentioned earlier, the olive tree is the only being that survived the earth deluge in Noah's time (Garr, 2009). When the olive tree is cut, it will sprout and flourish again, providing the poets with a perfect symbol of hope in eternity and resurrection. In both Spanish and Palestinian literature, the olive tree is the tree of immortality as narrated in many world mythological and religious traditions.

4. Homeland

Certain symbols of the olive tree appear in the Palestinian nationalist discourse. According to Leitch and Forth (2014, p. 57), in such discourse, "durability, longevity and rootedness of the olive tree, not its holy status, are foregrounded". The olive tree is considered a witness by the Palestinians that Palestine is their homeland, where their ancestors are as deep as the roots of the olive tree. It is employed as a symbol of the Palestinian identity. Many Palestinians see in the olive tree, which digs deep into the ground and adapts to the hard conditions, a representation of resilience which mirrors their rootedness in their ancestral homeland, Palestine.

Darwish intertwined his homeland and the olive tree, taking this tree as a permanent symbol of Palestine in all his works. In the following verses, he calls it *grandmother* to express the close relation that Palestinians have with this fruitful tree. This mutual love between Palestine and Palestinians is epitomized by the olive tree. The olive tree is connected to the earth, and it is part of its very beginning.

These soldiers, these modern soldiers
Besiege her with bulldozers and uproot her from her lineage
Of earth. They vanquished our grandmother, who foundered,
Her branches on the ground, her roots in the sky (Darwish, 2009, p. 107)

In his poem *I belong there*, Darwish presents evidence to the colonizer and the whole world to assure that Palestine is his homeland. Among many things, he didn't forget to mention the eternal olive tree as evidence of his belonging to this land. This tree is part of the whole symbology of the identity and existence of Palestinians. The Rootedness of the olive tree to the land symbolizes the relationship of pertinence that Palestinians have to their homeland. The Olive tree is an essential element in the mind of poets and the Palestinian nation as a whole of the term of the homeland.

In Palestinian poetry, the olive tree always forms an answer to the existential question about belonging to Palestine. The existence of olives in Palestine is evidence of this pertinence to these lands. Khan (2006, p. 44) confirms that Darwish, as a Palestinian poet, is expressing his nostalgia for his lost homeland, nurturing his memories solidly embedded in olive trees. This belonging to the homeland in Darwish's poetry "draws its power not only from re-imagined memories but from a re-invented consciousness that haunts the poet, constantly reminding him that he was deprived the opportunity to live his childhood fully by the olive trees."

I come from there, and I have memories
Born as mortals are, I have a mother
And a house with many windows,
I have brothers, friends,
And a prison cell with a cold window.
Mine is the wave, snatched by sea-gulls,
I have my own view,
And an extra blade of grass.
Mine is the moon at the far edge of the words,
And the bounty of birds,
And the immortal olive tree.

(...)

I learnt all the words and broke them up
To make a single word: Homeland (Darwish, 2013, p.7)

In Darwish's *A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies*, the olive is presented as an icon of a homeland for the soldiers who are fighting away from home. In a conversation between the poet and a soldier, who is dreaming of his homeland, the soldier mentions, among many things, the olive branches as a symbol of the homeland. Darwish continues his interrogation of the soldier about legitimacy and belonging to the land. The soldier leaves the poet to look for his homeland, as in the following verses,

When I filled his fourth glass,
I asked jokingly: Are you off?
What about the homeland?
Give me a break, he replied

(...)

He said goodbye and went looking for white lilies,
a bird welcoming the dawn on an olive branch. (Darwish, 2003, p.7)

Similar to Darwish, Samih Al-Qasim unifies the Palestinian identity and the olive tree. To him, the olive tree is Palestine. He confirms that he is a green olive, so he is a homeland. He is addressing his words to the reader of his verses, asking him if he can see the threshing floor, the place where the farmers used to thresh their grain harvest. He is answering, saying that he is an olive tree, so he is, by default, a homeland.

Look, didn't you see in my front a threshing floor?
Look, I am a green olive
I am a homeland (Al-Qasim, 1993, p.403)*

In her poem titled *illusions in Olives*, the Palestinian Poetess Fadwa Touqan talks about the olive tree as the homeland and the shelter, where her soul will be stronger to destroy all evils. The body becomes more powerful when being in the shadow of the olive tree in the homeland.

Here, here, in the shadow of my olive,
the soul destroys all evils
And the body becomes excellent in its isolation
and silence kills vain things (Touqan, 1993, p. 23)*

The Olive tree is a symbol of the homeland are very present in Spanish poetry, too. Verdejo, in his poem *Olivo-Pueblo* (Olive Tree-Town), is addressing his words to the olive tree calling it (*father olive*), considering it as his forefather. According to him, the olive tree is the descent of pagan gods to show the old existence of olives on earth. It has existed since paganism, which is the first religion of man on earth. Being the father of pagan gods also holds other meanings because paganism considers nature sacred, and it carries profound spiritual meanings. The Olive tree is the chief god and the supreme godhead, according to Verdejo. In the poem, the poet declares that the olive tree is the God of the first humans and their brothers. This connectedness between humans and olives makes it the perfect symbol of homeland and rootedness in Verdejo's poetry. Olives are brothers of farmers who are silent like them; they are olive-eyed, and their skin is green-black like the color of olive trees.

Olive, father olive
of the pagan lineage of the gods,
tormented male
that you sink your roots
like clenched hands
in the land that you feud and ruin.
do you know you are brother?
of the old silent farmers,
like you, silent?
Olive-eyed laborers
and with green-black skin (Verdejo, *Olivo-Pueblo*)*

Nebrera in *Olivares* (Olive Groves) emphasizes that the olive tree is his homeland because he feels comfortable and tranquil when he rests in its shadow; it provides him with protection and safety. It is the refuge and the shelter under whose canopy the poet cries when he departs it, though a short return will be made after a few days. For him, the olive tree is the main source of food as it provides him with oil. It is also the main source of security as it provides him with refuge, which, together with food, represents the two essential needs of human beings.

Under the branches of this olive tree
My body sleeps today
under the protection of this tree.
between bitter tears here
I said goodbye to her
that I was leaving to return inside
One week.
In olive oil I will bathe
my body, between olive trees
I will dream again (Nebrera, *Olivares*)*

In the same connection, Antonio Gala in *Olivares de Mancha Real* (Olive groves of Mancha Real) is telling his beloved that he is not worried about her when the storm (as a symbol of death) strongly blows because he is hiding her in the olive grove. Both his beloved and the olive trees are considered as the homeland of the poet.

The storm very soon
will crack his whips. Does it matter?
I no longer dream when I am asleep or awake,
I already have you between olive trees
You are my homeland (Gala, 1994, p. 471)*

Canalejas, in her poem *Olivo* (Olive tree), is accepting being dead and buried conditionally that her grave be built under an olive tree. The Olive tree is presented as the last destination for humans, according to her. It is the homeland of humans during their lifetime and the other life. This love of the olive tree shows the strong relationship between the tree and the Spanish poets and their appreciation of it, being elemental in their homeland culture.

Your land can give me
the final kiss,
if under an olive tree
they could bury me (Canalejas, *Olivo*)*

5. Conclusion

The main goal of this study is to highlight the symbolism of the olive tree in Spanish and Palestinian poetry, with reference to four main symbols: resistance, peace, eternity, and homeland. In both poetries, the olive tree is employed as a symbol of resistance because it is a very social and culturally dominant element. This comparative study has shown that Spanish and Palestinian poets utilize olive trees as a symbol of resistance against occupation, cruelty, invasion and oppression made by a man on the man himself and on nature. It is also used as a sign of steadfastness against the injustice made in the societies they live in. The study has shown that the poets have connected the olive tree and the white dove to symbolize peace, which is derived from religious heritage. As revealed in the study, the longevity and immortality of the olive tree have made it the best example to signify eternity. It has shown that the olive tree in both cultures has its own national dimensions, embodied in the identity of the land. The study has concluded that the olive tree has been converted in Spanish and Palestinian poetry as an anchor symbol of resistance, peace, eternity, and homeland. I have not found enough studies about the symbolism of the olive tree in Palestinian and Spanish poetry from a comparative point of view. It is thus hoped that this study will be a threshold for future studies.

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