

Enemy of the Sun

Poetry of Palestinian Resistance

Poets of Liberation Series

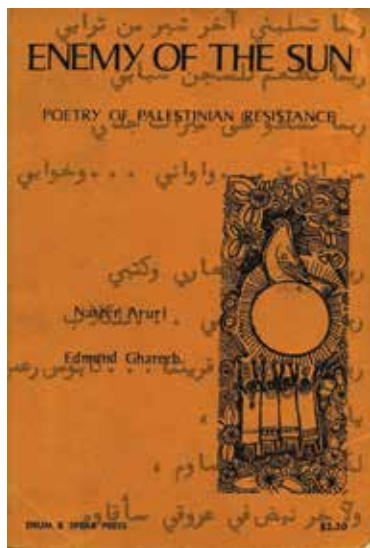
By Naseer Hasan Aruri and Edmund Ghareeb

Drum and Spear Press, 1970, Out of print

Reviewed by Daphne Muse.

Literary Intersections in the Diaspora

How a small independent African American press published the first anthology of Palestinian poetry



In 1970, to resounding acclaim, Drum and Spear Press published *Enemy of the Sun: Poems of Palestinian Resistance*. A subsidiary of Afro American Resources, this small independent press was based in Washington, DC. It had been founded in 1968 by Charles Cobb, Jr. and a devoted cadre of fellow activists from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). On the heels of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the rising Black Power Movement, which awakened the consciousness of millions across the country and around the world, the press and its bookstore came to life from the ashes of one of the many burned-out buildings across the city.

Printed in 10,000 copies, the anthology was a best seller. It became part of the curriculum of the University of Massachusetts, among others, and was added to the personal libraries of prisoners across the country, including Soledad Brother George Jackson. The voices of Naomi Shihab Nye, Naseer Aruri, and Tawfiq Zayyad resonated powerfully, introducing a more global readership to their works. In the 1960s, poet and editor Naseer Aruri (who went on to become an internationally recognized scholar, activist, and expert on Middle East politics, United States foreign policy in the Middle East, and human rights) and Edmund Ghareeb (now a journalist and senior scholar at The Palestine Center of the Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development in Washington, DC) had been inspired at a conference in Beirut to collaborate on editing this anthology, guided by their vision for the future of Palestine and a mutual passion for poetry.

In their introduction, Aruri and Ghareeb noted: “Two types of Arab poetry [have] emerged since the Palestinian War of 1948. [Comparing] the poetry of [poets living in] the Palestinian diaspora, the West Bank, and across the Arab world with poetry of Palestinians in captivity [it is notable that]... helplessness, defeatism and cynicism seemed to dominate the former, [whereas] the latter was characterized by unyielding resistance.” Ghareeb elaborates: “After a series of rejections, we took the book to Carl Senna, an acquisitions editor at Beacon Press. Three weeks after his enthusiastic response to the manuscript, he told us Beacon could not publish the book. Senna suggested we take the manuscript to Drum and Spear Press.”

Their vision and perseverance resulted in a powerful literary coup, as within a year the anthology was published. It became a launching point for the voices of a generation of Palestinian poets, including award-winning writer Naomi Shihab Nye. Samih Al-Qasim’s poem “Enemy of the Sun” echoes the intersectionality of the Civil Rights Movement, African Liberation Fronts, and hundreds of post-colonial liberation movements across the globe. As reflected in the sometimes searing and poignant poems, the Palestinian people are as complex and dynamic as any other nation of people eager to claim their history and land from the claws of oppression.

Repeated harassment by US government forces, most especially the Federal Bureau of Investigation, resulted in the closure of the press in 1971. But *Enemy of the Sun* lives on as part of the legacies forged by fires from the Middle East to Washington, DC.

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An article written by Greg Thomas, professor at Tufts University, on the misattribution of “Enemy of the Sun” to legendary political prisoner George Jackson is available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14775700.2015.1178947>.

