

Representations of violence in Friendship Generation poetry

Dr Joanna Allan

Learning outcomes

- To be able to talk about how violence is represented in Saharawi Friendship Generation poetry
- To have an understanding of why Friendship Generation poets highlight violence in their poetry

Recording and disseminating evidence of violence

- MINURSO, the UN peace-keeping mission, does not monitor human rights abuses
- Treatment of Human Rights Watch researchers
- Lack of international media presence
- “Citizen-journalists” take on the burden.
Fisahara/WITNESS training for Saharawi activists:
<http://watching-western-sahara.silk.co/>

Why is this a problem? Invisibilisation of the violence

- <https://vimeo.com/7848938>
- Why do you think the women are upset?

El Aaiun o Beirut, p.1

- Can any joint honours Spanish/Arabic students tell us what “El Aaiún” means?
- Are there any other words in the poem with multiple meanings?
- What do you think the “edificio azul en Nueva York” refers to? Do Awah’s sentiments here resonate with those of Aminatou Haidar?
- Why does he reference Paris, Madrid, Beirut, Sinai and Saigon?
- What’s the key message of the poem? What key imagery and metaphors does Awah draw on to communicate this?

Aminatou, la victoria, p.5

- It's an ode to Aminatou Haidar, a Saharawi heroine and advocate of nonviolence

How do such representations of violence support the NVR movement?

- A key problem for Saharawis, and indeed a barrier for the success of their nonviolent strategy, is the invisibilisation of their situation of violence
- The Friendship Generation ‘back up’ the citizen-journalists in the OTs by attempting to communicate the violence to an international audience
- Aminatou Haidar described her aim to help all Saharawis to shake off their fear. The F.G. animate activists by writing odes to them, recognising the activists’ considerable sacrifices and incredible efforts.



Campaigning

- But the Friendship Generation poets go further than poetry
- They are also campaigners, attending protests in Spain, lobbying on behalf of Saharawi political prisoners and denouncing the plunder of the territory
- For example: <http://blogs.elpais.com/donde-queda-el-sahara/2013/12/carta-de-los-escriitores-saharauis-al-parlamento-europeo.html>

Next week...

- You will be interviewing Bahia Awah for half of the class
- What are the benefits of asking questions?
- Please participate in the DUO blog

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