

## Digital Diva of Dissent: Suheir Hammad's Digital Poetic Resistance and Tech-Driven Activism

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### Abstract

Within the framework of the digital diaspora, Suheir Hammad, an American poet of Palestinian descent and a political activist, exemplifies the impact of technology and digital communication on the diaspora experience. Hammad's spoken-word poetry confronts marginalization, challenges binary oppositions, and advances the concept of universal humanity by subverting language through literary and performative methods. Drawing on bell hooks' concept of resistance, this paper argues that Hammad's performative poetry is not only a site for resistance, but it also highlights the broader historical and political contexts of repression and state-sponsored violence, particularly as they pertain to Palestine. Through digital platforms and live performances, Hammad amplifies the voices of her diasporic community, situating her work within the more immense struggles against systemic injustice, settler colonialism, and cultural erasure. Consequently, Hammad's poetry resonates through as both a product of and a response to these oppressive forces, leveraging digital channels to motivate diasporic communities to express and reshape their identities creatively. This paper explores how Hammad's art moves audiences and fosters transnational solidarity by addressing the intersections of political repression, displacement, and activism. Her work emerges as a compelling example of "digital resistance," which builds on the legacy of combat literature while navigating across the immediacy and accessibility of contemporary digital media.

**Keywords:** *Suheir Hammad; Digital Resistance; Digital Diaspora; Marginality; Settler Colonialism; Combat Literature; Hip-Hop*

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نجمة المعارضة الرقمية: شعر المقاومة الرقمي لسهير حماد و النشاط القائم على التكنولوجيا المستخلص

في إطار حالة التشتت و الفوضى التي أحدثتها عصر الثقافة الرقمية ، تقدم أعمال سهير حماد الشاعرة و الناشطة السياسية الأمريكية الفلسطينية مثالاً على تأثير التكنولوجيا والاتصالات الرقمية على تجربة الشتات. تواجه اشعار حماد التهميش، تبتدى أي تباين أو تناقض، وتعزز مفهوم الإنسانية في شتي بقاع الارض من خلال إضعاف لغة المستعمر و ذلك عبر الأساليب الأدبية والأدائية. وبالاعتماد على مفهوم بيل هوكس للمقاومة، يري هذا البحث أنه في حين أن شعر حماد الأدائي هو موقع للمقاومة، فإنه يسلط الضوء أيضاً على السياقات التاريخية والسياسية الأوسع للقمع والعنف الذي ترعاه الدولة، لا سيما فيما يتعلق بفلسطين. من خلال المنصات الرقمية والعروض الحية، تعمل على تضخيم أصوات المهمشين في مجتمعات الشتات، وتضع عملها ضمن النضالات الهائلة ضد الظلم المنهجي، والاستعمار الاستيطاني، والمحو الثقافي. وبالتالي، فإن شعر حماد يتردد صدها باعتباره نتاجاً لهذه القوى القمعية واستجابة لها، حيث يستفيد من القنوات الرقمية لتحفيز مجتمعات الشتات للتعبير عن هوياتهم وإعادة تشكيلها بشكل إبداعي. هذا البحث يكشف كيف يحرك فن حماد الجماهير ويعزز التضامن العابر للحدود الوطنية من خلال معالجة التقاطعات بين القمع السياسي والتهميش والنشاط. يبرز عملها كمثال مقنع على "المقاومة الرقمية"، التي تعتمد على تراث الأدب القتالي بينما تنتقل في أنية الوسائط الرقمية المعاصرة وإمكانية الوصول إليها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سهير حماد؛ المقاومة الرقمية؛ الشتات الرقمي؛ هامشية؛ الاستعمار الاستيطاني؛ الأدب القتالي؛ الهيب هوب

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Resistance and Tech-Driven Activism**

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**Introduction**

For marginalized communities, digital diaspora is a significant concept that allows them to create space for connection and reclamation (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010; Ponzanesi 2020). digital diaspora is coined by Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff (2009), who defines it as the "online articulation of identities, cultures, and social connections of people displaced or dispersed from their homelands". This definition emphasizes the role of digital platforms in enabling diasporic communities to maintain cultural connections, foster solidarity, and engage transnationally. Another perspective is offered by Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller (2012), who describe digital diaspora as the use of digital technologies by migrants to sustain relationships and engage with their countries of origin, host societies, and transnational networks, highlighting the fluid and networked nature of diasporic identity. Both definitions underscore the transformative potential of digital technologies in reshaping how diasporic communities navigate identity, relationships, and transnational connections.

Amidst multiple global crises, digital technologies provide diasporic actors unprecedented opportunities to stay connected to their homelands, maintain their cultural identities and address systemic injustices (Medrado et al., 2020; Miner, 2022). Within this framework, Suheir Hammad, an American poet of Palestinian descent and a political activist, uses digital and performative platforms to mediate between the personal and the political, elevating stories of resistance. She focuses on the Palestinian experience as a settler colonial population by reflecting on their lived experiences of displacement, systemic violence, and cultural erasure (Knopf-Newman, 2006; Majaj, 2008).

Suheir Hammad was born in Amman, Jordan, in 1973 to parents who were Palestinian refugees, and immigrated to the United States when she was five. She grew up between Brooklyn, New York, and a multicultural African American, Dominican, and Haitian descent population. This background had a profound effect on her poetic voice, blending Arabic and English to mirror her Palestinian American identity and past.

Hammad's work often deals with themes of displacement, marginality, and the struggles of diasporic communities, and it offers a personal lens through which she critiques more systemic issues.

Hammad's poetry inspires so immediate — and permanent — because it gives voice to one of the most salient and oft-repeated concerns in the life of communities that have long been marginalized by political repression and state-sponsored violence. Her employment of hybrid language, in which Arabic and English are interspersed, and her turn to digital platforms highlight the potential of technology to amplify the voices of those rendered voiceless (Moore, 2020; Pickens, 2014). Hammad's dual identity as a Palestinian American poet is a powerful lens through which to engage themes of belonging, marginality and resistance.

Placing Hammad in the context of this broader tradition of Arab-American literature and resistance poetry, this paper situates Hammad's contributions against the backdrop of historical context in the post-9/11 moment, through the Iraq War, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Majaj, 2008; Conrey-Fadda, 2014). It contends that her capacity to weave together the poetic and the digital in ways that may constitute next-generation radical literature is nothing less than an evolution of resistance literature. Through its engagement with bell hooks' concept of marginality as a site of resistance (hooks, 1989a) and Franz Fanon's notion of combat literature (Fanon, 1968), this paper explores how Hammad's art disrupts dominant narratives and seeks to forge transnational solidarity.

In this paper, I argue that through her spoken-word performances and digital activism, she reimagines the parameters of resistance literature, engaging with urgent political crises with urgency and accessibility. Her work is both a critique of systemic oppression and a call to action, challenging diasporic and marginalised bodies to reclaim their narrative and their identity against the backdrop of continued injustice. In doing so, she joins forces as part of a collective struggle that crosses borders, linking people around the world who are fighting for justice and liberation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The analysis of Suheir Hammad's work is informed by key theoretical concepts that explore resistance, marginality, and the intersection of identity and activism. Central to this framework are the ideas of bell hooks, Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and contemporary theories on the digital diaspora and performance studies. These perspectives provide a

lens to understand Hammad's poetry and activism as both a continuation and evolution of resistance literature.

To begin with, bell hooks' concept of marginality serves as a foundational pillar for understanding Hammad's work. Hooks argues that marginality is not merely a site of deprivation but also a space of radical possibility—a location from which the oppressed can envision alternatives to dominant structures (hooks, 1989a). In "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," hooks emphasizes the transformative potential of marginality, describing it as a creative space where the silenced can find their voice and articulate alternative narratives (hooks, 1989b). Hammad embodies hooks' vision of "speaking from the margin" through her poetic integration of Arabic and English. By weaving these languages together, she disrupts Eurocentric linguistic norms and constructs a hybrid form of expression that challenges hegemonic frameworks. For instance, in her poem "Blood Stitched Time," Hammad juxtaposes Arabic phrases like "Ib rohi, ib demi" (with my soul, with my blood) with English, asserting a connection to her ancestral homeland while inviting readers to engage with a multilingual reality. This hybridity exemplifies hooks' notion of reclaiming and redefining cultural identities to resist erasure.

Moreover, hooks' ideas resonate with Stuart Hall's (1989) concept of cultural identity as a dynamic and evolving process shaped by resistance and negotiation. Hammad's blending of linguistic and cultural elements not only reclaims her Palestinian identity but also reinforces its evolving nature in the diasporic context. This act of linguistic hybridity, as Hall suggests, challenges fixed notions of identity and instead positions it as a site of ongoing contestation and redefinition.

Building on this, Frantz Fanon's concept of "combat literature" offers another critical lens for analyzing Hammad's work. Fanon describes combat literature as a tool for decolonization, articulating the lived experiences of the oppressed and mobilizing collective resistance (Fanon, 1968). Hammad's poetry aligns with this tradition by critiquing settler colonialism in Palestine and fostering a collective consciousness among marginalized communities. For example, in her poem "What I Will," she declares, "I will not dance to your war drum," rejecting imperialist violence and the co-option of resistance. This mirrors Fanon's call for literature that galvanizes the oppressed, as her work disrupts colonial narratives while reshaping the portrayal of Palestinian identity.

Additionally, David Polanski (2021) emphasizes how combat literature challenges and disrupts dominant narratives, a strategy that Hammad employs by blending personal and political themes to forge a shared sense

of resilience. Her refusal to translate certain Arabic phrases into English aligns with Fanon's emphasis on reclaiming language as a weapon against cultural erasure. This tactic also resonates with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) call for linguistic decolonization, where reclaiming indigenous languages serves as a direct challenge to colonial systems of erasure and domination.

Equally important, the transformative potential of digital platforms enhances the impact of Hammad's resistance. Theories on the digital diaspora, such as those by Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) and Ponzanesi (2020), highlight how digital tools enable diasporic communities to sustain cultural connections and amplify resistance. Alonso and Oiarzabal describe digital diasporas as networks that allow displaced communities to reconstruct identity, share opportunities, and engage in collective activism. Hammad exemplifies this dynamic through her strategic use of hashtags, online campaigns, and multimedia performances, situating herself as a pivotal figure in "digital resistance." Campaigns like #SaveSheikhJarrah reframed Palestinian struggles within broader conversations about systemic oppression and settler colonialism.

By leveraging social media, Hammad creates what Sandra Ponzanesi (2020) terms "postcolonial archives," preserving cultural narratives and resisting erasure. Furthermore, Andrea Medrado et al. (2020) argue that digital platforms enable oppressed communities to articulate alternative narratives that challenge systemic injustices, a role that Hammad fulfills through her online presence. Her ability to intertwine the immediacy of digital activism with the urgency of her poetry underscores her effectiveness in bridging artistic and political resistance.

In addition to her digital activism, Hammad's engagement with performance studies further enriches her approach. By drawing on oral storytelling traditions and hip-hop's performative elements, Hammad integrates identity, resistance, and audience engagement. Susan B.A. Somers-Willett (2005) observes that performance poetry creates dynamic spaces where the personal becomes political. Hammad's live readings exemplify this dynamic by blending music, rhythm, and audience interaction to evoke cultural memory and solidarity. In "Zaatar Diva," she uses rhythm and repetition to echo Palestinian oral traditions, grounding her work in historical resistance while making it accessible to contemporary audiences.

Dashiell Moore (2020) highlights how Hammad's performances invoke cultural memory, creating a dialogue between past and present forms of activism. Similarly, Ron Silliman (2005) argues that poetry in live and



digital spaces functions as a “confession of lived experience,” fostering authenticity and relatability. This performative dimension is particularly evident during the #SaveSheikhJarrah campaign, where Hammad’s live readings generated powerful emotional responses, evoking a sense of shared struggle and solidarity among her listeners.

Furthermore, Edward Said’s insights into cultural resistance provide a broader intellectual context for understanding Hammad’s work. Said (2003) underscores the role of intellectuals and artists in resisting cultural erasure and advocating for social change. Hammad’s integration of poetry, activism, and digital media aligns with Said’s notion of the “counter-narrative,” which seeks to challenge dominant discourses and reclaim marginalized voices. Her ability to connect historical struggles with contemporary movements reflects the evolving nature of diasporic activism and the critical role of art in fostering transnational solidarity.

Hammad’s refusal to translate certain Arabic phrases underscores hooks’ (1994) assertion that language is both a site of oppression and a tool of liberation. By maintaining linguistic and cultural authenticity, Hammad challenges Western audiences to confront cultural and linguistic otherness. While this choice risks alienating some audiences, it also empowers others by affirming the centrality of Palestinian identity in her work. This act of linguistic defiance not only resists colonial power structures but also reinforces the idea of language as a repository of memory and resilience.

Therefore, Hammad’s work transcends conventional boundaries, merging the personal and the political to redefine resistance literature for the digital age. Her ability to blend historical lineage with modern forms of expression positions her as a key figure in Arab American literature. By incorporating the theories of hooks, Fanon, Said, and other scholars, alongside contemporary perspectives on digital media and performance, Hammad’s poetry exemplifies the critical role of art in fostering a global network of solidarity and resistance. As digital platforms continue democratizing storytelling and activism, Hammad’s strategies provide a compelling model for reimagining the possibilities of resistance in the 21st century.

### **Hammad’s Language of Resistance**

Hammad's use of language becomes a powerful instrument in her resistance; it encapsulates both her Palestinian heritage and her experiences as part of the Arab American diaspora. Her poetry sets itself against those dominant structures of power embedded in language, thus creating a space where the voiceless can express their sense of self and reclaim their history. Drawing upon bell hooks' assertion that language

can be both a site of oppression and a tool of liberation (hooks, 1994), Hammad turns the tables on traditional linguistic hierarchies by fusing Arabic and English with formal and colloquial speech in a hybridized way of speaking.

To illustrate, in her poem “Breaking Poems,” Hammad deliberately decides to refrain from translating specific Arabic words and phrases, thereby compelling non-Arabic-speaking audiences to confront the complexities of cultural and linguistic otherness. This choice disrupts the predominance of English as a universal medium, compelling readers to navigate the gaps and silences intrinsic to multilingual texts. The lack of translation functions as a form of resistance, indicating a refusal to dilute or commodify Palestinian identity for the convenience of Western audiences (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 1989). In verses such as, “Jabaliya back, Ramleh back, Jenin back, il Khalil back, il Quds,” for example, Hammad invokes locations of Palestinian identity without glossing, thereby emphasizing that these places are effaced from dominant geopolitical discourses. This is a method that reinforces cultural identity while at the same time subverting Western literary expectations by requiring active engagement from the audiences with the text. The act of seeking meaning in her untranslated Arabic is an exercise in confronting linguistic hegemony, challenging the dominant assumption that English must encompass all cultural expressions. Further, Hammad's use of Arabic disrupts colonial power structures by highlighting linguistic autonomy and reclaiming cultural space within predominantly English-speaking narratives. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s notion of decolonization through language holds particular significance in this context, as it highlights the importance of indigenous languages in countering cultural imperialism (Ngũgĩ, 1986). Hammad’s incorporation of Arabic challenges the colonial imposition of English as the prevailing linguistic framework, affirming Palestinian identity's resilience and vitality.

Moreover, by refusing to translate Arabic terms, Hammad not only preserves the uniqueness of her cultural references but also resists the homogenizing impulses inherent in colonial language systems. This is in line with Stuart Hall's (1989) observation that cultural identity is forged in practices that actively resist incorporation into dominant structures.

In a comparable manner, in her poem “First Writing Since,” composed in reaction to the events of September 11, 2001, Hammad interweaves Arabic terms such as “habibi” (beloved) with the English language, thereby providing intimate cultural markers that challenge homogenization. Expressions like “I cried when I saw those bodies”



emphasize her affiliation with a common humanity while asserting the particularity of her diasporic identity. Through juxtaposing universal themes of grief with culturally specific language, Hammad forces readers to engage with multiple layers of meaning, thus precluding simplistic interpretations. As Fanon (1968) puts it in his analysis of the decolonial struggle, language reclamation is necessary to dismantle the psychological and cultural dominance effected by colonial powers. Hammad's linguistic strategies epitomize this principle by making Arabic a means of resistance and self-definition.

In "Born Palestinian, Born Black," Hammad enhances this linguistic defiance by highlighting the intersectionality of her identity and its connections to worldwide struggles against systemic oppression. Phrases such as "We are a people with roots deeper than the war drums of empires" juxtapose the imagery of profound resilience with the violence associated with colonialism. The poem's refrain, "born black, born Palestinian," emphasizes the compounded marginalization encountered by individuals possessing intersecting identities, affirming that these identities serve as sources of strength rather than stigma. By integrating phrases such as "watan" (homeland) and "shuhada" (martyrs) without explaining, Hammad declines to frame her identity within Western paradigms, instead asserting that readers engage with her on her cultural and linguistic terms. This reflects Barbara Harlow's (1987) description of resistance literature as a realm in which marginalized voices assert their agency in opposition to hegemonic erasure. Likewise, in "Zaatar," Hammad's employment of culinary imagery to evoke themes of memory, displacement, and cultural preservation reinforces her linguistic resistance. The poem portrays zaatar not merely as a spice but as an emblem of Palestinian heritage and continuity: "Oregano that remembers the soil / My grandmother's hands crushed it." In this context, the sensory richness of the Arabic term zaatar grounds her narrative in cultural specificity, thereby rendering it an act of resistance against erasure. The phrase "I taste zaatar / And I am back in the land stolen" establishes a connection between memory and physical displacement, thereby embedding Palestinian identity within both language and tradition. The decision not to translate the term zaatar into its English counterpart underscores its importance as a cultural marker that defies assimilation. Hammad's strategy is consistent with the concepts proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1983) regarding "minor literature," wherein language serves as a mechanism for destabilizing prevailing structures and reconceptualizing identity. By incorporating Arabic into her poetry, Hammad redefines the limits of linguistic expression, contesting the

colonial legacy that endeavours to render non-Western languages either invisible or subordinate. This methodology guarantees that Palestinian cultural markers are maintained at the forefront of the narrative, opposing the cultural homogenization fostered by colonial power structures.

In live readings, Hammad enhances these dynamics by employing rhythm, intonation, and pauses to underscore her words' emotional and political significance. For example, in "Mike Check," Hammad utilizes the repeated phrase "Can you hear me?" as a literal sound check and a metaphorical appeal for acknowledgement. This technique spotlights her voice as a marginalized figure, and the interplay of Arabic and English further disrupts monolithic linguistic expectations. Another great example is the performance of "Not Your Exotic," where her cadence brings out the frustration and defiance associated with being exoticized, amplifying her words' power through tonal shifts and emphatic repetition.

In phrases like "I am not your harem girl / Not your 'exotic' spice," Hammad offers a critique of Orientalist fantasies, simultaneously reclaiming her agency regarding her identity. Hammad's linguistic strategies serve as a formidable means of resistance, compelling Western audiences to examine their cultural assumptions while reinforcing the vitality and significance of Palestinian identity. By not adhering to translation or linguistic assimilation expectations, she creates an environment where the marginalized can claim their space without apology. This approach enriches the discourses of decolonization and resistance literature, ensuring that her poetry resonates across various cultural and linguistic contexts. Her work has epitomised how language can be a tool of resistance and a medium of solidarity, reaching out to her audience in a common humanity rooted in cultural authenticity and defiance.

### **Digital Platforms as Empowerment Tools**

Suheir Hammad's oeuvre is an intricate intertwining of themes of resistance and identity, using digital spaces to challenge and subvert prevailing Western ideologies. Hammad clarifies in her poetry and performances how digital platforms empower subalterns to inscribe their voices onto global resistance networks. As Miner (2022) points out, digital spaces provide tools for communities to build alternative narratives that counter exclusionary frameworks. Pérez Aronsson (2020) further emphasizes this point by stating, "activism in digital spaces offers liberation from white space" (78), thereby enabling individuals and collectives to resist the constraints of physical oppression. Moreover, Hayes (2023) elucidates that social media's capacity to disseminate

images of occupation has transformed digital platforms into essential tools for advocacy, thus reinforcing the power of Hammad's activism within these spaces. This view is consistent with Alonso and Oiarzabal's (2010) examination of digital diasporas as spaces for maintaining cultural relations and promoting resistance.

First, Hammad uses social media and other digital spaces to practice her art beyond the reach of traditional face-to-face performances. Her voice is projected onto the world stage. Engagement in movements such as #FreePalestine and #SaveSheikhJarrah gives a voice to stories of resistance, connecting them to worldwide movements against structural oppression. For instance, during the #SaveSheikhJarrah movement, Hammad's social media posts and performances, including excerpts from her poem "Roots," stimulated extensive discussions regarding the intersection of poetry and activism. Comments such as "This poem gave me chills—it's the truth we need right now" exemplify her capacity to engage emotionally and politically with audiences. Ponzanesi (2020) indicates that such digital spaces help in forming affective networks that allow for diasporic identity and solidarity. Hammad's poetry critically examines these essential narratives by offering complex portrayals of Middle Eastern and diasporic identities. Her digital presence works against reductive representations of Palestinian experiences while amplifying themes of displacement and resistance. For example, her use of hashtags like #SaveSheikhJarrah, in a way, not only contextualizes her poetry within the framework of current events but also invites global audiences into the political realities attached to occupation. In "Roots," her moving description of displacement—"We return to the land in every breath, in every step forward"—was well received, creating a sense of solidarity with the diasporic communities and activists. This corresponds with Harlow's (1987) characterization of resistance literature as an instrument for disrupting hegemonic narratives. Transitioning to her performative strategies, Hammad's utilization of digital platforms is especially noteworthy in addressing the racialized and imperialist structures that underlie the marginalization of Palestinians. By drawing parallels between Palestinian experiences and African American histories, Hammad employs hip-hop as a medium to articulate shared struggles. Hip-hop, a form of resistance within African American communities, has been transformed into a world stage in her work battling systemic oppression. For example, in "Breaking Poems," she says, "Back to Jenin, back to Khalil, back to where the beat began," thus connecting the rhythmic cadences of hip-hop to the heartbeat of Palestinian resilience. This connection affirms the global importance of hip-hop as a form

through which the voices of different subjugated communities might be articulated, placing Hammad within a framework much more significant than that offered by Palestinian struggles in and of themselves. Alluding to geographic origins and cultural heritage, she makes hip-hop a medium and channel through which many diverse movements for activism come alive. Lubin (2015) explains how cross-cultural references within the Afro-Arab political imaginary work to universalize these struggles for liberation, to be felt and identified with by communities fighting for justice worldwide. This approach cements her place within the tradition of anti-colonial struggle and points out the interconnectedness of the struggles of marginalized communities. Moreover, Lubin (2015) emphasizes that the Afro-Arab political imaginary is a field where these collective histories of resistance meet.

As Moore (2020) observes, “performance allows Hammad the space to critically temper the viewer’s engagement with her code-switching between Arabic and English” (117). This performative hybridity invites diverse audiences to engage with her work, fostering a sense of shared humanity and solidarity. Hammad frequently integrates vocal and nonverbal audience feedback into her performances, thereby creating a dynamic exchange that further extends the communal ethos of her poetry. She reconfigures the parameters of written and spoken poetry by integrating Arabic phrases with hip-hop rhythms, transcending cultural divides and fostering global solidarity. This aligns with Youmans (2007), who reveals that Arab-American hip-hop has been instrumental in expressing new forms of resistance. While other poets or activists on digital platforms lack this specific element, Hammad is unique in her incorporation of cultural specificity and intersectionality. Rupi Kaur, for instance, employs minimalism and universalism, focusing on themes of love and healing through visually simple and widely accessible formats. On the other hand, Hammad's poetry is more overtly political and linguistically dense, championing resistance and cultural specificity over universal relatability. Audience responses to these varying approaches emphasize their unique effects; Kaur’s work frequently elicits widespread emotional resonance among a global audience, whereas Hammad’s use of untranslated Arabic phrases and intricate political themes compels readers to engage actively with her message, thereby cultivating a more critical and reflective interaction. This dynamic illustrates how both poets successfully establish connections with their audiences, albeit through differing methodologies. Her insistence on including untranslated Arabic phrases compels audiences to engage actively with the text, rendering her

poetry a vehicle for education and a means of resistance. Similarly, Warsan Shire's diasporic emphasis exhibits thematic parallels with Hammad's work, especially concerning their shared utilization of untranslated words. Nonetheless, Shire's untranslated terms frequently evoke displacement's personal and intimate aspects, whereas Hammad focuses on the political ramifications of settler colonialism and resistance. For example, Shire's "Home" provokes empathy for refugees through powerful imagery, while Hammad's "Breaking Poems" explicitly critiques the erasure of Palestinian spaces, calling for acknowledgement of historical and geopolitical injustices. This distinction underscores Hammad's exceptional capacity to intertwine the preservation of culture with a steadfast critique of colonial systems. Harlow (1987) further contextualizes this assertion by noting that resistance literature frequently functions as a historical witness and a call to action. Engagement with the audience, mainly through social media, exemplifies the influence of Hammad's digital strategies. Posts that showcase her readings often receive responses such as, "This resonates with my struggle as an individual living in the diaspora," or, "Hammad's words serve as a reminder of the necessity of resistance." During the #FreePalestine movement, her posts motivated thousands of shares and discussions, with Western audiences demonstrating curiosity and solidarity. Statements such as "I had to look up what this meant, but it opened my eyes to a new perspective" exemplify how her employment of untranslated Arabic encourages non-Arabic speakers to interact with her cultural identity. This dual engagement demonstrates how Hammad's poetry educates and unifies diverse groups around common themes of resistance.

Moreover, Hammad weaves emotions like fear, rage, hope, and love into her poetry, allowing for an intense interaction with her audience. As Freire (2014) suggests, those are the very feelings that move people to mobilize against their oppressors for social transformation. Being a Palestinian-American Muslim woman shapes her activism; thus, she gives voice to many systems of oppression while calling for dignity and self-determination. For instance, in her poem "What I Will," Hammad rejects U.S. imperialism, declaring, "I will not dance to your war drum" (Hammad, 2006, 60). By asserting, "I will craft my own drum," she reclaims agency and autonomy, emphasizing the importance of self-determined narratives (Hammad, 2006, 61).

The multimedia nature of Hammad's digital presence further enhances her impact. Videos, spoken-word performances, and social media campaigns provide her with the means to express the emotional and political significance of her poetry in manners that traditional print media



cannot achieve. The incorporation of Arabic instruments such as the 'oud' and 'tabla' during her performances serves to familiarize audiences with Palestinian culture while simultaneously strengthening the global impact of her message (Youmans, 2007, 53). The blending of cultural and artistic forms highlights her capacity to bridge divides, fostering a transnational dialogue focused on themes of resistance and resilience. Riyanto (2017) notes that integrating traditional instruments within contemporary digital media enhances cultural authenticity while simultaneously amplifying narratives of resistance. Consequently, Hammad's work exemplifies the transformative potential of digital platforms in elevating marginalized voices. By rejecting colonial narratives and emphasizing the concept of intersectionality, she establishes a connection with audiences that resonates with her experiences of displacement and marginality. Her poetic voice interrupts prevailing ideologies, thereby challenging audiences to reconsider their assumptions regarding identity and belonging. Conrey-Fadda (2014) underscores this notion of intersectionality, observing that Hammad's incorporation of African American cultural elements empowers her to critique both local and global systems of oppression. This approach not only reinforces solidarity among the marginalized communities but also places Palestinian resistance within a worldwide context of anti-colonial struggle. Suheir Hammad uses digital platforms to transform these mediums into arenas of empowerment and resistance. With its added dimensions of performance and multimedia elements, her poetry can leap across cultural and geographic divides, creating an always-moving network of solidarity. Using hip-hop and spoken-word traditions, she constructs a powerful narrative that challenges systemic injustices while amplifying marginalised voices. In essence, Hammad's work is a prime example of the efficacy of digital activism in transforming the parameters of literature, performance, and political dissent.

### **Hammad's Digital Combat Literature**

Frantz Fanon's combat literature pertains to literature that challenges prevailing narratives and frameworks of Western capitalist and neo-colonial orders. Fanon underscored the need for forging a "new language and a new humanity" through appropriating narrative processes (Fanon 1968). His writings, particularly those that come out of the revolutionary movements, have galvanized various efforts to use literature as a tool of political and cultural resistance. As Polanski (2021) explains, combat literature seeks to oppose and invert the capitalist and neo-colonial order by re-imagining social and spatial arrangements. Similarly, the poetry of



Suheir Hammad embodies this revolutionary spirit in its steadfast critique of colonialism and desire for Palestinian liberation. Hammad's work aligns with Fanon's vision by challenging dominant representations of Palestinians in the mainstream media. Her poetry criticizes the reduction of Palestinians to stereotypes, particularly as terrorists or victims, and instead presents nuanced, humanized representations of their experiences. For example, her poem "What I Will" is exemplary in this resistance by rejecting the militaristic narratives associated with imperial powers: "I will not dance to your war drum" (Hammad, 2006, 60). Here, the "war drum" becomes a metaphor for U.S. foreign policies that support Israel's occupation of Palestine. By asserting, "I will craft my own drum," Hammad reclaims agency, emphasizing the importance of self-determined narratives. This aligns with Fanon's call for marginalized voices to disrupt dominant ideologies and assert their humanity.

While Fanon's combat literature frequently examines the ontological aspects of decolonization and the imperative of violence for liberation, Hammad concentrates on cultural and narrative decolonization. Her poetry undermines prevailing discourses through a distinctive amalgamation of personal and political themes, encouraging audiences to interrogate stereotypes and investigate alternative perspectives. For instance, in her rendition of "Mike Check," Hammad confronts the issues of racial profiling and systemic oppression by asserting, "Mic check, one two, one two—Mike checked my bags, my skin, my hair, my accent." This statement critiques the invasive examination endured by marginalized individuals and strongly resonates with those who have encountered comparable injustices. Responses on platforms such as YouTube frequently feature comments that assert, "This line hit hard—she's speaking to all of us who've been othered," thereby illustrating the transformative influence of her work on a wide array of audiences. At the heart of Hammad's approach is her adept utilization of digital platforms, including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, which facilitate her ability to engage with global audiences swiftly and customize her messaging for distinct communities. Through the immediacy of live updates and the visual appeal of multimedia posts, she effectively captures the attention of her immediate diaspora and wider activist audiences. Elements such as hashtags, live streaming, and the ability to share and amplify content prove instrumental in the viral spread of her messages. For example, with the use of hashtags like #SaveSheikhJarrah, she creates a centralized discourse that gains international attention. In contrast, with her live performances and Q&A sessions, she makes a personal touch with her audience, thus fostering the participatory nature of her activism. By

performing and sharing her poetry online, Hammad creates an open environment for dialogue and resistance in which there is always room for direct engagement, dynamic discussions, and openings for collaborative activism. Through live question-and-answer sessions, interactive comment sections, and shared content like performances and multimedia posts, she invites her audience to actively engage in the narratives of resistance and solidarity actively, thereby transforming digital platforms into communal spaces for activism and cultural exchange. Campaigns such as #SaveSheikhJarrah and #FreePalestine have amplified her voice, directly connecting her poetic themes of resistance and identity with tangible activism. These campaigns align with her overarching messages by highlighting systemic injustices while facilitating platforms for collective solidarity and discourse. Through her contributions, Hammad weaves the urgency of her poetry with the immediacy of digital activism, thereby transforming these movements into extensions of her artistic and political vision. For instance, Hammad's Instagram post featuring a clip of her reciting "Not Your Exotic" garnered thousands of likes and comments such as, "This poem gave me chills—it's the truth we need right now," illustrating how her work galvanizes digital audiences. Moreover, her ability to intertwine activism with cultural expression on these platforms has earned critical attention. While some Western critics praise her refusal to dilute her cultural specificity for broader accessibility (Conrey-Fadda, 2014), this approach also prompts a nuanced reaction from her audience. By maintaining cultural and linguistic authenticity, Hammad empowers those familiar with her heritage while challenging others to engage deeply with unfamiliar contexts. This decision, however, risks alienating some audiences who will find the untranslated elements out of reach, thus underlining the tensions between authenticity and outreach.

Hammad's untranslated Arabic words further disturb linguistic hegemony in cyberspace, prompting questions and active involvement by Western audiences. In the context of the #FreePalestine movement, her poem "Roots" included untranslated Arabic phrases like "ib rohi, ib demi" (with my soul, with my blood), thereby underlining the deep tie between her and her country. Comments made by Western readers on social media frequently contain remarks such as, "I had to look this up, but it made me realize the depth of her words," thereby illustrating how Hammad's linguistic strategies compel readers to engage in the comprehension of her message. This phenomenon reflects Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) advocacy for linguistic decolonization, wherein the reclamation of

indigenous languages serves to resist the erasure perpetuated by colonial systems.

Hammad's association with hip-hop as a resistance medium places her work within an international tradition of anti-colonial struggle. Hip-hop, which developed as an answer to systemic racism and inequality in African American communities, is a highly effective tool for articulating collective stories of oppression. Hammad's use of hip-hop rhythms and cadences allows her to depict similarities between the Palestinian struggle and other liberation movements, showing marginalised communities' interconnectedness. For instance, in "Breaking Poems," Hammad says, "Back to Jenin, back to Khalil, back to where the beat began," comparing the rhythm of hip-hop to the heartbeat of Palestinian resilience. This reflects how African American hip-hop has chronicled and opposed the legacies of slavery, segregation, and systemic discrimination, thereby strengthening the global solidarity among oppressed peoples (Youmans 2007). Hammad's performances frequently integrate traditional Arabic musical components, including the 'oud' and 'tabla,' in conjunction with modern hip-hop rhythms. This amalgamation of styles links diasporic audiences to their cultural heritage while contextualizing Palestinian resistance within a transnational framework. Silliman (2005) posits that poetry in both live and digital environments operates as a "confession of lived experience," which enhances authenticity and relatability. Hammad's performances, especially during the peak of the #SaveSheikhJarrah campaign, emphasize this dynamic by eliciting profound emotional responses and cultivating a sense of shared struggle and solidarity among her audience.

Compared to other poets and activists who utilize digital platforms, Hammad's strategies are distinguished by their incorporation of cultural specificity and intersectionality. For example, whereas poets such as Warsan Shire strongly emphasise diasporic identity and cultural dislocation, Hammad's intentional refusal to translate Arabic terms presents a unique challenge to linguistic dominance. This approach is in harmony with Fanon's advocacy for the reclamation of native languages and Ngũgĩ's conception of linguistic decolonization. Unlike digital poets such as Rupi Kaur, who focus on universal themes of love and healing, Hammad's work focuses sharply on resistance and decolonization, making her contributions distinct in the digital age. Hammad's approach highlights the specificity of Palestinian experiences while fostering solidarity with other marginalized communities worldwide.

Through her digital presence, Hammad expands the reach of her poetry and reclaims narratives that have been appropriated or erased by

hegemonic powers. Her strategies provide a framework for other marginalized groups to utilize digital platforms as instruments of resistance. She illustrates how digital spaces can amplify voices, nurture solidarity, and challenge dominant narratives by employing hashtags, live performances, and multimedia projects. Medrado et al. (2020) argue that digital activism allows for the building of counter-narratives that challenge systemic injustices within marginalized communities. The future of digital battle literature—a tradition informed by work like that of Hammad—holds much promise to address global disparities. The work of Hammad binds her legacy with previous Palestinian resistance poets, like Mahmoud Darwish, while at the same time pushing the boundaries of resistance literature into the digital sphere. Her ability to combine traditional forms with modern tools ensures a continuation of cultural resilience and solidarity against systemic oppression. As digital platforms continue democratizing storytelling and activism, Hammad's approaches provide a framework for rethinking the possibilities of resistance in the twenty-first century. The integration of poetry, performance, and digital media underscores her place as a pivotal figure in contemporary combat literature, effectively uniting cultural preservation with transformative activism.

### **Conclusion**

Suheir Hammad redefines the role of poetry in the digital era, using it as a tool of transformation for empowerment, connection, and resistance. Her work deftly interweaves the traditional themes of Palestinian resistance poetry—land, identity, the pain of exile—with the immediacy and accessibility inherent in digital activism. Through digital platforms, Hammad has been amplifying underrepresented voices, recording injustices, and raising global awareness, making her messages resound with diverse audiences. Her use of untranslated Arabic phrases boldly asserts cultural authenticity, challenging linguistic hegemony—inviting spectators to engage with cultural otherness and the complex nature of diasporic identity. Hammad's poetry serves to connect with diasporic communities by affirming their narratives, while also fostering solidarity among marginalized groups through shared stories of resistance. In addition, her involvement in digital campaigns and social media movements, such as #FreePalestine and #SaveSheikhJarrah, situates her work within the broader context of global struggles for justice and equality. She further expands this effect by engaging in cross-platform projects and collaborating with artists and activists, thus bridging generational and cultural divides with her message. Hammad is able to

crisscross the personal and the political with the traditional and the digital, pointing out the new role that literature can play in reconfiguring cultural and political landscapes. Her work serves as a testament to the efficacy of poetry and digital tools in confronting systemic injustices, promoting transnational solidarity, and motivating collective action to achieve liberation and equality. Through these endeavors, Suheir Hammad solidifies her status as a central figure in the continuous global pursuit of justice and human rights.

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