



Displacement, Resistance, Decolonization and Identity in Mahmoud Darwish's Selected Poems

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the coherent tapestry of Mahmoud Darwish's four poems where the individual feelings and the national causes seem uniformly inseparable. Palestinian suffering, struggle, resistance, displacement and identity crises have been identified and treated in all selected four poems. A close reading of "In Jerusalem," "Identity Card," "To My Mother," and "The Passport" illustrates how different themes facilitate understanding subjugation and colonization of a nation in poetry artistically constructed. On the whole this essay is an attempt to employ the socio-political and cultural politics to examine different themes for a better understanding of Darwish's selected poetry. Here the present researcher intends to study societal structures, political dynamics, and cultural influences and see how social norms, government policies, historical events, and cultural traditions shape human interactions, decisions, and identities. Within this framework, cultural concepts related to postcolonial theory are borrowed to illustrate modern man's challenges in the poems under discussion.

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1. Introduction

Due to the general colonial position of Palestine, not unlike the historical position of many other nations like India, Ireland and Nigeria, one could examine components of power relations as well as postcolonial resistance. However, there is another position in this regard which is unique to that of Palestine. The common way of colonizing a nation is exerted by an imperial country such as Britain and France; in the case of Palestine, colonization has taken place within through building a colonial settler system within another country supported by international powers. Thus resisting such a colonizer is much more complicated than the way many colonized nations resisted the colonial powers and reached independence after World War II. So little by little a settler regime was formed and fortified which was never shaken by the native resistance. Such a colonial regime has been possible by a "multi-national imperialism" (Wylie 285).

Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) joined PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) in 1973. Earlier he was imprisoned for several times from 1961-1969. He was active in the 1970s and 1980s. After his semi-exile he was banned from entering Israel. That was a common policy for punishing intellectuals and dissidents. According to T.S. Eliot, poetry has a social function (7). Here one could talk about resistance literature or resistance poetry which has a been very common function in the decolonization process.

From a broader scope, this study is an attempt to employ the socio-political and cultural politics to delve into different themes for a better understanding of Darwish's poetry. Here the present researcher intends to study societal structures, political dynamics, and cultural influences and see how social norms, government policies, historical events, and cultural traditions shape human interactions, decisions, and

identities. In this framework, concepts from cultural studies, postcolonial theory are borrowed to show modern man's challenges in the poems under discussion.

2. Significance of the Study

This study is highly relevant and important as it fills the gap in similar studies regarding the relationship between the personal and the collective in reading and understanding Palestinian poetry. To show the colonial relationship and the need for decolonization in the Palestinian context which has lasted for about seventy years is vital for both the Palestinians and the world.

3. Purpose of the Study

The objective of this research is to show how Mahmoud Darwish, through his poetry, reflects his personal experiences in a way comprehensible for all mankind and the oppressed Palestinians. The purpose here is to identify displacement, resistance, decolonization and identity in four selected poems and show how they are integrated in his poetry. The poetry of Darwish is, in fact, the silenced voice of the 20th century Palestinians.

4. Literature Review

According to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* literature could construct an imaginative ground for connecting members of a nation together. This could justify the efforts of Darwish to construct and reconstruct an imagined nation with common feelings despite the worldwide dislocation of the Palestinian nation.

It is true that according to Edward Said, Orientalism is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'" Also that "a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts ..." (Said, *Orientalism* 2). The point in Darwish's poetry is that Zionism is regarded as a twentieth century colonialism. So this point makes his poetry a surrogate against colonialism.

Moreover, "Resisting Colonialism through Nature: An Ecopostcolonial Reading of Mahmoud Darwish's Selected Poems," by Ahmed and Hashim shows the way Darwish's poetry resists the Zionist colonialism and hegemony through the elements of nature. This idea has been integrated as a methodology in this study.

Alenzi's *I Am Neither There, nor Here: An Analysis of Formulations of Post-Colonial Identity in the Work of Edward W. Said and Mahmoud Darwish a Thematic and Stylistic Analytical Approach*, a Ph.D. dissertation traces colonialism in the Palestinian contexts and how it paves the way for the formation of a postcolonial identity. In addition to identity issues this study gives insights concerning related themes such as displacement, resistance and decolonization.

5. Research Questions

1. How Mahmoud Darwish, a Palestinian poet, depict the crisis of modern man in his selected poems from a socio-political perspective?
2. How does the poetry of Darwish present a deeper understanding of how poetry in general serves as a liberating medium for expressing and critiquing the socio-political and cultural dynamics that shape individuals' experiences in the modern world?
3. What are the socio-political and cultural factors which shape the situation of modern Palestinian man in the selected poems of Darwish?

6. Discussion

To show the crisis in the Palestinian society and illustrate the related plight of modern man, four poems have been selected together with depiction of related contexts. Each poem is analysed under one of these topics: displacement, resistance, decolonization and identity. These four poems have been selected: "In Jerusalem," "Identity Card," "To My Mother," and "The Passport," to illustrate the reality of the Palestinian situation and portray the challenges faced by modern individuals within socio-political and cultural contexts.

“In Jerusalem”

The most important issues of Darwish's poem “In Jerusalem” include exile, identity, and resistance. Not merely for his person but for the collective mind of his people his poems mostly overflow with longing for the homeland, suffering due to displacement and struggle for cultural survival. Jerusalem is not merely a geographical space but it goes beyond the physical place in what it refers to as timeless. It reviews different historical eras at one time. The perspective of the onlooker is that of someone who reflects on exile, displacement and yearning for home.

“In Jerusalem”

In Jerusalem, and I mean within the ancient walls,
I walk from one epoch to another without a memory
to guide me. The prophets over there are sharing
the history of the holy ... ascending to heaven
and returning less discouraged and melancholy, because love
and peace are holy and are coming to town.
I was walking down a slope and thinking to myself: How
do the narrators disagree over what light said about a stone?
Is it from a dimly lit stone that wars flare up?
I walk in my sleep. I stare in my sleep. I see
no one behind me. I see no one ahead of me.
All this light is for me. I walk. I become lighter. I fly
then I become another. Transfigured. Words
sprout like grass from Isaiah's messenger
mouth: “If you don't believe you won't be safe.”
I walk as if I were another. And my wound a white
biblical rose. And my hands like two doves
on the cross hovering and carrying the earth.
I don't walk, I fly, I become another,
transfigured. No place and no time. So who am I?
I am no I in ascension's presence. But I
think to myself: Alone, the prophet Muhammad
spoke classical Arabic. “And then what?”
Then what? A woman soldier shouted:
Is that you again? Didn't I kill you?
I said: You killed me ... and I forgot, like you, to die. (Darwish 2007)

Darwish's poetry builds a natural connection between Palestinians and their land. In many of his poems, including “In Jerusalem”, he directly or by implication deals with colonization and oppression in the context of his native land. The voice in the poem represents a displaced native. One experiences the struggle of Palestinians against occupation.

The above poem deals with the themes mentioned, that is Displacement, Resistance, Decolonization and Identity, if not more themes. Generally speaking, most of Darwish's poetry is concerned with the desire for homeland, the suffering of displacement, and the struggle against oppression and subjugation. In the title of the poem (“Jerusalem”) which refers to the historical city respected by the followers of three religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the reader not only imagines the historical city but also all the connotations and symbols gathered throughout history especially the modern one (following World War II and the establishment of the state of Israel).

There are two significant points to make here: firstly, the city of Jerusalem refers to a geographical space; secondly, it is metaphorically charged with historical facts. The phrase “inside the old wall”, on the one hand, highlights these historical facts from which there is no escape. On the other hand, it alludes to the variety existing throughout history in terms of religion, race, religion, and so on. Parenthetically, the same wall that used to stand for variety and multiculturalism might be connected to the apartheid wall built between natives and settlers. This wall nowadays stands for evil concepts like racism, prejudice and oppression.

There is something more interesting in the second line of the poem. The phrase “I walk from one epoch to another” makes the reader's mind wonder throughout the history of the city of Jerusalem. It reflects both

the span of the city's life which includes all people who have inhabited it from different filiations as well as the narrator's own memories which include all decades following the establishment of the state of Israel and its confrontation with the native inhabitants of Palestine. This second reference becomes more meaningful especially when we consider the poet's remaining of the same second line: "without a guide" which reflects the abundant memories of the narrator. This tells us about his collective remembrances that remind the qualified reader of the poet's hard distancing from his homeland. It also shows how he has been longing for this homeland after decades of exile and wondering.

This line announces a deep truth: prophets are not merely representing faith in God; they also interpret history, say of a city, within the relevant context. In this sense prophets help the reader interpret the epochs of history. This perspective paves the way for a ground for treating important issues such as exile, displacement as well as identity. It shows how one's identity is defined according to the place and the events that have taken place within history in or surrounding that place.

However, later when we come to the soldier who asks a woman for her identity card, this issue of identity becomes more crucial. Here the poem moves from the universal language of poetry and the philosophical history to real fact which is the result of existing political decisions in occupied Palestine. The themes of oppression, colonization, subjugation, displacement and potential exile emerge. This also emphasizes the theme of identity crisis which will be treated in detail in the other poem "Identity Card". Here also this card represents occupation and continuous monitoring. As it was observed earlier, Darwish is good at connecting the personal to the collective affairs. In his oeuvre, meaning transforms the level of interpretation from geographical to the historical and from the historical to the spiritual. The physical poem here stands for the individual and collective memory, personal and collective history and personal and collective pain.

Overall, "In Jerusalem" stands for the possibility of avoiding despair and replacing it with hope. As explained, the poem is embedded with grounds for various types of conflict and tension: there are the different followers for the different religions; the different experiences, personal and collective; and different ideas and philosophies for reading the long-standing city. Historically speaking, it has been a stage for different peoples to live, work and rule. In addition to that, Jerusalem's historical background shows many wars and conflicts behind the present state of the city.

This hope is particularly relevant when the reader considers it in historical and political contexts. The poem, in these contexts, represents the long history of conflict between Palestinians and Israelis in terms of cultural, religious as well as political. It sounds like the poem generally favours not a single state but a two-state solution to resolve the conflict and give the opportunity to both sides to live in peace. One such political solution was on the verge of an official announcement in 2003 Geneva Initiative where the two sides discussed issues of borders, security and the status of the city of Jerusalem. Lexdot Legal Opinion also is concerned with the idea of the two-state solution, its challenges and the means for the promotion of this idea (Lexdot.com).

I jumped from the bed of my childhood onto the path of exile. I was six. My entire world turned upside down and childhood froze in place, it didn't go with me. The question is whether it's possible to restore the childhood that was taken by restoring the land that was taken, and that's poetic quest that gives rhythm to the poem itself. Finding the child Mahmoud Darwish who was one is possible only in the poem. Not in life. (Darwish, Memory 32)

It is clear that the world of the poet is an ideal and optimistic world especially when the childhood period is in view.

"Identity Card"

Identity, displacement and postcolonial resistance are the most important issues of Darwish's poem "Identity Card". It criticizes subjugation and shows inclination towards sympathy and better realization. Resisting identity erasure is a common theme in his poetry, which is debated in different circles. It reflects mostly on the problem of land loss, which usually leads to loss of land. Different identity problems would result. The colonial experience creates trauma, which encourages individuals to resist and struggle for their native identity.

"Identity Card"

Put it on record!
 I am an Arab
 I am a name without a title
 Patient in a country
 Where everything lives with a whirlpool of anger.
 My roots
 Were entrenched before the birth of time
 And before the opening of the eras
 Before the cypress, and the olive trees
 And before the grass grew
 My father is from a family of ploughmen.
 Not from the nobles.
 And my grandfather was a peasant.
 Without a line or genealogy!
 He teaches me the highness of the sun before reading books.
 My house is a watchman's hut.
 Made of sticks and reeds.
 So does my status please you?
 I am a name without a title.
 Put it on record.
 I am an Arab.
 Colour of hair: jet black.
 Colour of eyes: brown.
 My distinguishing features:
 On my head the "iqal cords over a keffiyeh
 Scratching him who touches it.
 My address:
 I'm from a village, remote, forgotten,
 Its streets without name
 And all its men in the fields and quarry.
 What's there to be angry about? (Alenzi 130-31)

"Identity Card" is included at the beginning of this collection. At this stage of Darwish's development of style and maturity of personality, he uses the common language and the common everyday subject of the Palestinians, very much realistic. It is a very simple routine problem: Palestinians had to show their identity card wherever they went. This simple ritual confrontation of the Israelis was severely questioned by this poem, which has turned to a formal announcement against that irritating routine problem exercised by Israeli soldiers. In the collection, the tone of the voice in the poem is determined and optimistic. Generally speaking, the poem is of a high caliber: "The poem's power lies partially in its stark language, uplifting tone and simple, direct images, which endow the speaker with a kind of primal nobility" (Hilmy 65).

Socialist sort of committed literature, as described by Jean-Paul Sartre (Poursanati 70), was very much in view in this collection. At that time many Arab poets followed this trend of writing. The international wave of struggle for independence that followed World War II was in vogue at that time. Patriots preferred death for one's country or nation rather than humiliation. This belief was something said and done in the aftermath of such global happenings. After he was driven to move to Lebanon, Darwish's writing energy for resistance increased. At this stage, the poet becomes mature in the style and gathers the ability to write at two levels, literal and symbolic. For example, his treatment of the woman beloved refers to both biographically real women as well as poetically symbolic ones.

Darwish also uses history and mythology to give his poetry new dimensions. At certain critical moments, his poetry is comparable to the poetry of T.S. Eliot and William Butler Yeats. A good example is Darwish's "The Phases of an Anat." It was when he moved to Lebanon following the destruction of his native village by Israelis that he thought of reconstructing Palestinian poetic mythology much like Irish mythology: "Beirut was an Island upon which Arab immigrants dreaming of a new world landed. It was the foster mother of a heroic mythology that could offer the Arabs a promise other than that born of June War" (Darwish, Memory 134). The poem mentioned above stands for such native mythology:

Similarly, in the aftermath of the Nakba, Darwish invokes the mythological figure of Anat – the

Canaanite goddess of the moon, love, war, and fertility – to reclaim Palestine’s glorious past and resist cultural effacement. Through –The Phases of Anat, Darwish is recreating the myth of Anat from a subaltern perspective, aiming –to employ myth as an effective tool to resist appropriation of Zionist dominance|| (Dhillon, 2010). The poem becomes a poetic battleground where Darwish invokes Anat’s powers to defy occupation and revive Palestinian identity. Through rich symbolism and vibrant imagery, Darwish implores Anat to return, symbolizing the Palestinian people’s collective longing for liberation and cultural elevation. Like Yeats, Darwish employs mythology not merely for aesthetic embellishment but as a powerful tool for cultural preservation and defiance. Yeats’s –Deirdre|| challenges colonial norms through the tragic fate of its heroine, while Darwish’s –The Phases of Anat|| serves as a rallying cry against Palestinian displacement and cultural erasure. (Alsyof 174)

Later Darwish returns to Palestine to bring back his identity and his nation back to life. This has been the experimental impact that he receives with his stay in Lebanon and his activism in PLO together with his intellectual colleagues. Thus he has reached maturity and his poetry found international readership.

What is of interest to the present researcher in this dissertation here in the context of this poem is the postcolonial aspect. Thus this section is devoted in a reading of “Identity Card” from a Saidian perspective. It is already clear that one major concern of Edward Said, postulated in his ground-breaking book *Orientalism*, is identity. Now it is obvious that Western representation of the Orient or the East creates the identity of the East or Easterner. Exotic, chaotic, inferior and static are the attributes bestowed upon Easterners in Western representations. So the technique of “Otherization”, according to Said, is the foundation of constructing the stereotypical identity of the Easterners or Orientals. This takes place in the context of Colonization and/or Imperialism.

Exile and resistance also contribute to the idea of identity as these greatly shape the poet’s personal and collective identity. These two concepts have converted identity into a dynamic phenomenon. Exile marks a disconnection for Palestinian as they separate from their homeland. This disconnection gives them to think about their memories and merge them with the dynamic perception when ultimately they develop new identities. This leads to continuous resistance which attempts to defy all sort of colonization and oppression. Actually, “Darwish stood out as the poet of the national resistance” (Abu Eid 33). In the poem under discussion, the refrain “Write down! I am an Arab” shows defiance against colonial acts as measures taken for erasing the history and identity of the Palestinians.

Edward Said was also interested in questions about identity. There are three titles of his books: *Orientalism*, *Covering Islam* and *The Question of Palestine*. In these three titles he uses Michael Foucault’s concepts of discourse and power relations (Moosavinia et al. 191). These concepts are very often treated in Darwish’s poetry either directly or by implication or symbolism. However, particularly relevant is Said’s *The Question of Palestine* where the writer mostly focuses on Palestine’s identity:

In the first chapter, he addresses the most basic but essential question: what is Palestine? tracing the history of this territory. In the second chapter, the focus shifts to examine what Zionism means from the standpoint of those who are its victims, being negatively affected by it. In the third and fourth chapters, Said traces the history of the movements for Palestinian self-determination and discusses possible future developments in this area. (Alenzi 40)

So this title reveals many facts about the identity of the Palestinian land and nation as well as history. It also reflects on the identity of the Israeli opponent and its establishment.

Said, on the whole, deconstructs the Western worldview of introducing the identity of the East and its nations and individuals. He treats the misrepresentations and invites for a re-reading of all classical text in this light.

Bhabha’s concept of hybridity is treated only briefly. However, this theory could be applied to Darwish’s poetry and his personal as well as collective identity. Both Said and Bhabha have realized the significance of hybridity, hybrid characters in literature and hybrid personalities of writers and scholars. According to Bhabha, immigrant critics and scholars experience the feeling of being situated between two cultures of components of culture (see Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*). Likewise, Said postulates that exile is one unavoidable fundamental component of a scholar’s existence. He believes that exile is a condition of a

permanent search regarding identity without stability (Said, *Representations*, xvi). It is exile which gives the opportunity to even young and amateur scholars to develop dynamic identities. Such identities could stand against all sorts of opponents.

This idea is applicable to Darwish's poetry as well as personality. His almost forceful expulsion from his native land aided him to build a resilient and resisting personality which is reflected in his poetry as well. Then he saw his identity as fluid and evolving. Another positive influence on the character of Darwish in the sphere of his host land was the fact that he learned abundantly from other nations and people and got acquainted with many modernist writers and intellectuals. This fact elevated the poetry of Darwish from the Palestinian to the universal.

In "Identity Card," the movement was crystallized in a shift from a strictly personal and nationalistic sphere to a global perspective which appeals to human beings all over the world. The poem focuses on the refrain, "Write down! I am an Arab" at the beginning of each stanza; nevertheless, it reaches a universal status of oppression and corresponding resistance. The speaker's frustration with displacement and marginalization resonates not only with Palestinians but with all people who have faced dispossession and injustice. His references to labor, family, and ancestral roots evoke a shared human experience, making the poem relatable to anyone who has struggled for recognition and rights. The repetition of "Write down!" serves as both a demand for acknowledgment and a declaration of existence, reinforcing the idea that identity is not just personal but collective.

Resistance pervades all parts of the poem: And the number of my card is fifty thousand / I have eight children / And the ninth is due after summer. The number "fifty thousand" shows the bureaucratic system of ruling by Israelis which inspires resistance. Also the "eight children" and the forthcoming "nine" all are signs of resisting the soldiers and the ones who rule the soldiers. According to what Foucault has said where there is power there is resistance (Foucault 95). Darwish has identified the path of writing resistance poetry. It has been in response to what has been marked as source of power. This is the way of the elite and intellectuals in society to shoulder their social responsibility. That is especially true when direct struggle and fight are not in action, "Foucault's 'unmodulated minimization of resistance' provokes other 'alternative consciousness allied to emergent and alternative subaltern groups within the dominant discursive society'" (Racévskis 154 quoted in Moosavinia 185).

"To My Mother"

Very often than not, the mother has been used by Darwish as a metaphor for land in general and Palestine in particular. Thus the theme of longing of the voice in the poem stands for both his yearning and love for his mother as well as his homeland, as it is commonly perceived in terms similar to Mother Earth and mother land. The mother is associated with the sanctity and purity of the land which has constantly the common culture of the Palestinians. Through the poet's longing for the mother and the cultural signs of the homeland like bread, coffee and touch he meticulously relates the personal to the collective and national feelings. So the poem's postcolonial reading would tell us that it invites the reader to resistance toward the occupation and erasure of his native homeland.

"To My Mother"

To My Mother

I yearn for my mother's bread
And my mother's coffee
And my mother's touch
Childhood memories grow up in me
Day after day
I love life with a passion because
If I were to die
I would be ashamed of my mother's tears!
Take me, if I come back one day
As a scarf for your eyelashes
And cover my bones with grass
Baptized by the purity of your ankle
Pull my shackles . . .
With a tuft of hair . . .
With a thread gleaming at the hem of your garment

Perhaps I will become
Become a God . . .
If I touch the bottom of your heart!
Put me, if I return
As fuel for the oven of your fire . . .
And as a clothesline on the roof of your home
Because I can no longer stand
Without the prayer of your day
Now that I'm old, bring back the stars of childhood
So I will be able to join
The smallest birds
On their way back . . .
To the nest of your waiting! (Darwish 1989: 98)

Darwish has continuously blended the personal concerns with postcolonial themes in his poetry. In "To My Mother," the poet transfers meaning at two different levels. On the one hand, the poem reflects love and sanctity for a mother. The reader accepts this very naturally as it is a universal and very natural theme. On the other hand, at a second level again the poet draws upon the universal theme of a mother representing homeland. The originality of Darwish is that he wins sympathy and understanding for Palestine and the Palestinians when relating the universal to the particular.

This way, the poet elevates both poetry and his homeland simultaneously. Poets have always made attempts to prove that poetry and literature in general are capable of reforming ideas and changing situations. Poetry could put an end to oppression and occupation as other genres by great literary figures like Joseph Conrad have helped to critique colonization or imperialism. If this is not possible then literature could inspire people with resistance and struggle. The Palestinian problem should be solved either through peace or resistance and struggle. "To My Mother" is emblematic of Darwish's poetry.

Thus Darwish inspires universal empathy and sympathy through his poetry. Of course, usually the common movement is to move from the particular to the universal. What Darwish accomplishes here is to start from the universal theme and try to reach the particular meaning. Speaking of passion for the mother has been the departure from a universal theme to get to the end of the poem which reflects the particular problem of Palestine.

Hussain Hamzah reviews the position of mother in Darwish's poetry in his article "The Image of the Mother in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish". The image of mother has been used widely to represent the real mother and the symbolic aspect of land. However, in this article the reader realizes that the image has been much improved:

Repetitions occur most frequently in the poems written after the exodus from Beirut. Quite possibly the poet's repeated exits/exiles were indeed a cause of repetition in his poetry. His mother then became a source of stability which compensated the poet for his loss of his physical and spiritual place. (Hamzah 191)

The writer of the article attributes four roles for the mother but what is important here is the mother associated with the land, culture and identity. His repeated exiles and displacements distanced him from both his homeland and his mother. So the poet's longing is for two things at the same time.

Here is how the poet works out his poem from the beginning. First he introduces the natural bond between mother and child associating the mother with the basic needs of a child like bread, coffee and touch. Then the poet illustrates how the mother wrought his sense of self and his relation to life. Third he associates the image of the mother with the holy from religion in order to elevate her in general. This, of course, shows how significant mother is to the poet. Then he shows his thirst for a reunion with the mother which is highly significant in terms of theme. His longing is connected to exile, displacement and distance from mother and homeland. Darwish's most important achievement in this poem is to move from emotional love for mother to the longing to one's homeland. The whole project of this poem is universally acknowledged even in translation as it deals with two important and universal themes of love and longing for mother and homeland, connected here. The final lines of the poem show a longing for the return to innocent childhood when he would have the care and touch of his mother and his cozy home and "nest" of home.

This love and closeness expected from mother and homeland always needed by mankind become the main motivation for the Palestinians to resist the oppression they have been undergoing throughout their lives. Although metaphorical, Palestinian longing for their homeland does not stand at a personal level; it is also collectively cultural which gives aspirations to them to reclaim their identity and land. An evidence from the poem is the reference to the "nest" as well as the idea of being "baptized" by his mother's purity which is associated with renewal and resistance against the oppression and subjugation. To conclude, "To My Mother" is an inspiration for the people of the land to yearn for connection and seek their roots. This is possible only through resistance against the erasure of their culture.

"The Passport"

Displacement and resistance as important elements in a postcolonial reading are present in this poem. According to Edward Said and Home Bhabha these elements are closely related to identity problems especially in the Palestinian context. The poem, generally, resists the reduction of Palestinian identity to papers or documents like passport. Emotional and psychological consequences of such crises are destructive and the only way is to resist such confrontations with self-evident and universal response rooted in the very land and its nature where the subjects have been born and brought up. Most critics have admitted that people expected poets to be the mouthpiece of their aspirations: "This is exemplified in the resistance poetry of the Palestinians Darwish and al-Qasim, whose poetic accomplishments have raised a local tragedy to the level of a universal one" (Adonis et al. 8).

"The Passport"

They did not recognize me in the shadows
That suck away my colour in this Passport
And to them my wound was an exhibit
For a tourist who loves to collect photographs
They did not recognize me,
Ah... Don't leave
The palm of my hand without the sun
Because the trees recognize me
All the songs of the rain recognise me
Don't leave me pale like the moon!
All the birds that followed my palm
To the door of the distant airport
All the wheat fields
All the prisons
All the white tombstones
All the barbed boundaries
All the waving handkerchiefs
All the eyes were with me,
But they dropped them from my passport
Stripped of my name and identity?
On a soil I nourished with my own hands?
Today Job cried out
Filling the sky:
Don't make an example of me again!
Oh, gentlemen, Prophets,
Don't ask the trees for their names
Don't ask the valleys who their mother is
From my forehead bursts the sword of light
And from my hand springs the water of the river
All the hearts of the people are my identity
So take away my passport! (Alenzi 238-9)

"The Passport" also yields itself easily to a postcolonial interpretation and it has been subject to arguments in the context of power relations. One could map out this perspective on the poem extensively. It is very obvious that the tragic life of Darwish and what he has undergone have been crystalized in his poetry. Although this fact could be true about many poets and writers it is particularly true when it comes to this Palestinian poet. In fact, his poetry has been tremendously influenced by exile, displacement and conflict.

It is very well known that he was an eye witness to the destruction of his village Al-Birwa which was annihilated when the Israeli State was announced and established in 1948 by David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency. In his poetry, Darwish is always yearning for a lost homeland. This way he resists prevalent discourses through his poetry which connects the personal to the collective identity.

Moreover, on the whole, "The Passport" can be seen as an act of ideological decolonization that paves the way toward an analysis of how he critiques colonial perspectives and artistically struggles for cultural and national identity. It is a resistance to stand against all sort of colonial forces. This resistance, from one perspective, is rooted in the nature of Palestinians and even the nature of Palestine. In the poem the reader marks how elements of nature beautifully come to the rescue of the narrator to prove the identity: trees, valleys, light and river. These symbolically illustrate how the poem is strongly associated with resilience and defiance against occupation and subjugation.

Palestine together with its identity is inseparable from its nature and the poet has realized this fact and applied it in his poems:

The impact of nature is quite vivid in the literary works of Darwish. This is because Palestine is different from other countries in the region due to the presence of four climatic region: mountainous areas, valleys, desert, and coastal plains. The diversity of climate has a tremendous impact on the literary works of Darwish and this diversity is clear in the use of different metaphors in his poetry. Such metaphors reveal a great deal about the attachment of the poet to his homeland. He invokes a sense of attachment and belonging to the Palestinian landscape. (Masood 64)

As expressed above, the poet's or the narrator's personality as a Palestinian is inseparable from the natural flora and fauna. As a postcolonial approach, nature is most relevant to the Palestinian identity because nature always stands above culture (the new fabricated by the State of Israel such as the passport). This fact is self-evident: "The poems about nature show how Darwish's identity as Palestinian cannot be separated from nature. This illustrates that identity and home are expressed through natural elements in Darwish's poetry" (Masood 64).

It is quite clear that the metaphor of "tree" in this context stands for rootedness and thus home which is very much associated with identity as a serious aspect of postcolonial studies especially resistance. It is possible to say the same thing about the "valleys". Thus trees and valleys both make the reader ponder on associations with identity issues. They are elements within nature and naturally resist any sort of exile, displacement and destruction. They stand for the Palestinian spirit of endurance, patience and struggle.

Thus Darwish's idea clarifies the powerful connection between the Palestinian mind and the Palestinian land. This indicates that despite the occupation of the land the mind of the "free" people could always feel free and have the ability to decolonize the mind if not the occupied land. This fact has showed throughout the history of the Palestinian nation:

... as an active voice for the attachment between the Palestinian identity and land, Darwish is endowed with an expansive sense of opposition that enables him to evoke a strong element of interconnected resistance. He sows the seeds of resistance through the bonded elements of nature and human identity and it grows up interrelated and manifested as the embodiment of both Palestinian land as represented by the trees, the valleys, light and the river's water and the Palestinian identity symbolised by 'all the hearts of people'. Indeed, the elements of Palestinian identity and the aspects of the occupied land are delicately merged in his poetry and it is difficult to say which of the two predominates. (Ahmed, et al. 97-98)

These quotations are reflected in the lines of poetry by Darwish which have always insisted on the close relationship and connectedness between nature and the Palestinian identity. Just like "olive" which has always stood for Palestine, other major and minor elements of nature on the land of Palestine reflect fractions of natural connections with Palestinian identity.

7. Conclusion

The poems reviewed above, "In Jerusalem," "Identity Card," "To My Mother," and "The Passport" together or separately but uniformly weave a tapestry where the individual feelings and the national causes meet

and seem inseparable. The Palestinian sufferings, struggles, resistance, displacement and identity problems have been introduced and treated in one way or the other in all four poems.

From the symbol of Jerusalem in the poem "In Jerusalem" which stands for belonging and resistance through the invitation to remember and reclaim the original identity of Palestine and resist the erasure of the land's originality; from Identity card in the second poem "Identity Card" which highlights the Arab identity and associates a sense of belonging and resistance to preserve that identity; from the symbol of mother in the poem "To My Mother" which stands for homeland both as natural and universal facts, where common nostalgic remembrances like bread, coffee and touch become the major inspiration for resistance; to the power of the symbolic passport, reflected in the poem "The Passport," which reminds the reader of exile and alienation and leads to a sense of resistance as the poem's critique of the passport as a means of subjugation and an evocation for a broader struggle for freedom from occupiers and justice in Palestine and the world.

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