

Resistance in Mahmoud Darwish's "I Come From There": A Discourse Analysis

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Abstract—Postcolonial studies have dealt with the protest literature since they consider it as the voice of the oppressed people. In the same aspect, resistance literature begins in Palestine with Ghassan Kanafani and Mahmoud Darwish after 1948. Protest literature aims not only at freeing the oppressed from dominating powers and overturning the authority but also at liberating the humans from oppression. "The term resistance "Moqawamah" was first applied in a description of Palestinian Literature in 1966 by the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanfani in his study "Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine" (Harlow, 1987). Mahmoud Darwish has been involved in Palestine's political affairs throughout his entire life. In "I Come from There", Darwish tries to raise the voice of Palestinians; therefore, it can be heard all over the world. The theme of this poem assures his refusal to forget his country and unveils the struggle for a doomed homeland. By appropriating the descriptive and analytical method, along with the discourse analysis of Darwish's terms and phrases in the poem "I Come from There", this paper clarifies the symbolic meaning of the words to represent his sense of loss and sense of possession that he feels towards his land. Against this, the paper argues whether resistance protest literature succeeds in defending oppressed people and giving the subaltern their voices and whether literature helps the occupied people to get free and believe in non-violent resistance instead of violent resistance.

Index Terms—discourse analysis, Palestine, resistance, exile, protest

I. INTRODUCTION

"Mahmoud Darwish was born in 1941 in Palestine. Darwish grew up in a large family as he was the second of eight children and his father and grandfather played a decisive role in his life, teaching him to read and write (Shahin, p. vii). During the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, his village was destroyed and his family fled to Lebanon. "In 1948, after the Israeli takeover of Al-Birwah where he was born, the family moved to Lebanon, but Darwish later returned to the Acre district to live in a town called Deir Al-Asad. He wrote poetry from a very early age and his first collection, *Asafir Bila Ajnihah* (Wingless Birds), which contained his popular poem "Identity Card" was published in 1960 when he was only 19 years old" (Shahin, p. vii).

Darwish is considered Palestine's most eminent poet, as he published his first collection of poems, *Leaves of Olives*, in 1964. Since then, Darwish has published approximately thirty poetry and prose collections which have been translated into more than twenty-two languages. Darwish died on August 9, 2008, in Houston, Texas, after complications from heart surgery. By his death, the Palestinian people lost their voice and lost the fighter who kept insisting on Palestinian's ownership of the land. <https://poets.org/poet/mahmoud-darwish#:~:text=Considered%20Palestine's>.

Mahmoud Darwish was involved in Palestine's political affairs throughout his entire whole life. In "I Come from There", Darwish tries to raise the voice of Palestinians; therefore, it can be heard all over the world. The theme of this poem assures his refusal to forget his country and unveils the struggle for a doomed homeland. Furthermore, Darwish reassures that the occupation cannot "whitewash" his country and replace it with the occupier's culture in a multiculturalism context (Abd-Rabbo, 2020). Darwish raises his voice to announce that he belongs there and not to any other part of the world. In this poem, he emphasizes one reality that his roots are deep in Palestine and his dreams are left there since he walked this land before anyone else.

Postcolonial studies have addressed the protest literature since they consider it as the voice of the oppressed people (Al-Ghammaz, 2023). In the same aspect, resistance literature starting in Palestine with Ghassan Kanafani and Mahmoud Darwish after 1948 aims not only at freeing the oppressed from dominating powers and overturning the authority but also at liberating the humans from oppression. Barbra Harlow explains that "the term resistance "Moqawamah" was first applied in a description of Palestinian Literature in 1966 by the Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanfani in his study "Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine" (Harlow, 1987, p. 2). Darwish is one of the most eminent protest poets in Palestine who used his words as weapons to show his opposition and his refusal to occupy the land as well as the people of the land.

Hence, this article aims to argue whether resistance protest literature succeeds in defending oppressed people and giving the subaltern their voices and whether literature helps the occupied people to get free and believe in non-violent resistance instead of violent resistance. This paper is, however, divided into five main sections apart from the introductory section and structured as follows. Section Two (2) explores the Literature Review. Section Three (3)

examines the Methods and Conceptual Theory. Section 4 presents the Discussions and Analysis. Section (5) presents the Findings. In Section (6), the Conclusion is presented.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many critics acknowledge that Darwish's achievement has been said in several poets' statements, the creation of poetry that is wholly contingent and yet makes of that very circumstance its power. Darwish recognizes that confrontation with the Israeli Occupier who threatens the lives of all Palestinians has been a constant presence in his life, a source of poetic energy as well as an impediment to poetic creation. Darwish explains "My early interest in poetry developed with my realization that I am a victim of some form of military and political aggression" (Mattawa, p. 2). In her study, *Metaphors Stemming from Nature in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish*, Nawal Al-Sheikh dealt with a metaphor which is the most artistic device used in Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. She classified the metaphors used by Darwish into "three basic categories and concluded that these poetic metaphors are a logical outcome of his rural atmosphere" (Al-Sheikh, p. 1). In her article *Challenging the myth of a land without a people: Mahmoud Darwish's Journal of an Ordinary Grief and in the Presence of Absence*, Hania, Nashef confirms that "I look at Mahmoud Darwish's *Journal of an Ordinary Grief* (2010) and in the *Presence of Absence* (2011), drawing on Edward W. Said's *After the Last Sky* (1999), in which the authors recount the untold story of their marginalized people to give voice to the silenced through accounts of a lived and observed experience" (Nashef, p. 1).

In a similar study, Abdallah Abd-Alrahim in his article "The Impact of Displacement and Exile on Creating Cultural Gap and Value Conflict Between the First and the Second Palestinian Women Generations in Light of "The Inheritance of Exile "Novel" confirms that the Palestinian writer knew his role in literary resistance, so he practiced it creatively, as we saw examples of Mahmoud Darwish's resistance poetry, Ibrahim Touqan, Samih AlQasim and others (Abd-Alrahim, 2023).

Based on a brief literature review and a discourse analysis of Darwish's poetry, it can be said that they lend themselves to argue whether resistance protest literature succeeds in defending oppressed people and giving the subaltern their voices and whether literature helps the occupied people to get free and believe in non-violent resistance instead of violent resistance. More tellingly, Darwish has made all the required efforts to ensure that the poetry has helped the in giving voices needed by the oppressed people and the subaltern ones in Palestine.

Abd-Rabbo, Muna et al. in their study "Decolonizing imperialist discourse in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*: A Saidian perspective" have tackled the issue of the misrepresentation of the colonized people in *Persuasion* by Jane Austen. The researchers confirm that "for Said, the marginalized representation of the colonized territory of Antigua as simply a "colonial garden" for the British imperial patriarch further accentuates the superior sense of colonialist entitlement" (Abd-Rabbo, 2023, p. 1).

III. METHODS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Due to the nature of this study, the descriptive and analytical method and approach and the discourse analysis have been used to clarify the symbolic meaning of the words used by Mahmoud Darwish in "I Come from There". The reason to select this analytical approach is to analyze the implicit content of the text and pay attention to the words used by the poet. Therefore, the paper analyzes the terms and phrases used by Darwish in his poem representing the sense of loss and sense of possession that he feels towards his land. The study mainly pays attention to Darwish's language and the vivid imagery used to confirm that his similarity with other human beings. Drawish has a mother and a house filled with memories. In detail, his house was with many windows from which he can see the vast land and meadows of his ancestors. Darwish was like any other boy who has brothers and friends; he kept living his life normally until the day that his family was enforced to flee from their village.

The framework of this paper is restricted within the borders of this poem. By analyzing the poem, the paper tries to pay great attention to the psychological problems suffered by the speaker due to his exile. The article also sheds the light on the idea of homesickness and nostalgia that appears clearly as the main theme within the lines of the poem. Hence, the Palestinian-born philosopher, alongside the descriptive and analytical method and approach are outlined because of their role in exploring whether resistance protest literature succeeds in defending oppressed people and giving the subaltern their voices and whether literature helps the occupied people to get free and believe in non-violent resistance instead of violent resistance.

IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Mahmoud Darwish is a Palestinian poet who considered himself the spokesman of his people since a great deal of which has been spoken and written on the subject of land ownership before 1948. This atmosphere has helped Mahmoud Darwish pay great attention to the issue of land ownership. Darwish was afraid that the deceiving history may change the facts about the ownership of Palestine. Among those who discussed this subject is Curtis et al. in their book "*Palestinians: People, History, and Politics*". They claim that:

The Arab case against Israel, in the matter of Jewish land purchases, rests mainly on two claims: (1) that the Palestinian Arab farmer was peacefully and contentedly working his land in the latter part of the 19th century

and the early part of 20th century when along came the European Jewish immigrant, drove him off his land, disrupted the normal development of the country and created a vast class of landless, dispossessed Arabs ; (2) that a small Jewish minority, owning an even smaller proportion of Palestinian lands illegally made itself master of Palestine in 1948. (Curtis et al., 1975, p. 247)

In his poem "I Come from There", Darwish announces his belonging to Palestine and not to any other land, as he believes that he is rooted in Palestine, and all of his memories were hidden there. Darwish refused to accept exile though he lived most of his life exiled, yet he doesn't accept that fact. Darwish kept living in Palestine, where he revived his country in his poetry. According to Darwish, the voice of Palestine needed to be heard all over the world.

Darwish used vivid imagery in his poem "I Come from There" when he announces that he was born as "mortals", in which he announces that he is like any other human being and that he has a mother, he was born to a mother like all the human beings. He wanted to confirm that he is not an alien who came from nowhere, but he is like other human beings, has a mother and a house filled with memories. His house was with many windows from which he can see the vast land of his father and grandfather. Darwish was like any other boy who has brothers and friends where he kept living his life normally until the day that his family was enforced to flee from their village.

Darwish moved from his house to his confinement which is a cell that has a window, but this window is not like the windows of his house. He confirms that although he was imprisoned within this cell, yet he possesses the wave when he announces "Mine is the wave, snatched by sea-gulls, I have my view". This protest announcement confirms that Darwish lives in his world, and he has his view of Palestine. Regardless of the cold cell, Darwish flees with his imagination away from his confinement. Here, Darwish does not accept the occupation of his country and his land. He insists that he has his own "extra blade of grass" and this is a kind of announcement that I belong here. He also mentioned that this land is mine, and I own the grass and the waves, and you can never detach me away from this land, I belong here and I will stay here. Darwish wants to declare that history itself says that I was a Palestinian was here before Israeli people came to this land. According to Darwish, nobody is capable of changing the history of this land. In detail, Israeli people can cover the truth, but the veil that covers the truth will never stay forever.

The idea of belonging appears clearly when Darwish says in his poem "I Come from There":

"Mine is the moon at the far edge of the words,
And the bounty of birds,
And the immortal olive tree
I walked this land before the swords
Turned its living body into a laden table

He wants his voice to be heard all over the world, as this declaration makes it clear that this land has owners, and the occupation even if it stays for a long time will never be able to change this fact. When Darwish says "I walked this land before the swords" it means that Palestinian people are rooted here for a long time ago, and not even a single man can oppose this fact. These words assert that Darwish suffers from displacement, and insists on his presence on his land. Darwish's body was exiled but his soul refused this exile; therefore Darwish was torn between his exiled body and his soul that does not accept to be exiled.

Darwish had suffered from dispossession; he could not find himself in any elsewhere. This feeling of dispossession created a whole sense of ownership of his land. The words he used to talk about being from there tell that he insists on his ownership of this land.

He tries to create that kind of similarity between him and the cloud , as both of them are rendering to the sky, calling for their mothers, and weeping for their loss , in his poem "I come from There" he says:

I render the sky unto her mother
When the sky weeps for her mother.
And I weep to make myself known
To a returning cloud

In a literary analysis, Darwish compares himself to the sky that weeps for her mother, and he weeps for his motherland, he weeps for Palestine, he weeps to make himself known to a returning cloud. Darwish is afraid that one day his homeland will forget him; this sense of fear makes Darwish tries to clutch any hope of joining a cloud that is capable of crossing the borders to his homeland.

In the final lines of his poem, Darwish stops romantically rendering to his land, and now he turned to blood, as non-violent resistance now turned into a violent one. Darwish is convinced now that he must shed his blood for the sake of his country. He confirms that he is the owner of this land, but this ownership is in needs to be proven by shedding blood.

Darwish lived all of his life in a sense of dispossession, where he moved from one country to another as an exiled poet, yet he could not find himself anywhere except in Palestine. Palestine lived with Darwish in his exile because he could not accept any country as his homeland. The sense of the loss that he suffered from for long years could not enable him to live in peace.

As a protest poet, Darwish considered himself the voice of Palestine, and he was concerned with his nation; his mission as a poet was part of his resistance to the occupation of his homeland. He affirms within his poem that "I can break the rules", and Darwish does not accept the rules that say stop resisting. According to him, these rules can be broken easily; even he is capable of breaking all the words if they do not give him one word which is homeland. The

sense of dispossession that the poet lived left him in a vacant place where he cannot find himself a space to live. Darwish is obsessed with his homeland and can never think of any place which is equal to it. Resistance was part of Darwish's poetry, he as a poet of Palestine considered himself the voice of Palestine, and the words of his poems have the responsibility to convey his message to the whole world. Darwish is capable of rewriting the words, recreating the alphabetical order that will enable him to create one word which is homeland.

Harlow (1987) confirms that Resistance Literature mainly analyzes literary texts. It also informs readers about some of the urgent political and cultural debates taking place within liberation movements. Harlow provides a succinct account of recent social and political events in the various regions whose literature she takes up in Lebanon, South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Kenya, Egypt, and Nigeria. She discusses texts and culture itself as arenas of confrontation, frequently bound up with specific organized liberation movements but also with the collective struggles of people to seize control of their lives (Layoun, 1989) (<https://merip.org/1989/07/harlow-resistance-literature/>).

In "I Come from There", Darwish introduced his Palestine to the whole world and announced within this poem that his country has been stolen by others. He also mentioned that he is the exiled man who will never stop thinking about his country and about the way they have detached him from where he belongs. In detail, Darwish suffered from exile for long years, and he suffered from belonging to nowhere except Palestine. Darwish who died in exile could not forget his country; he was incapable of belonging to any other country than Palestine. For Darwish, Palestine is his mother, the place where his ancestors lived, where he was born and lived his early childhood.

"I come from There" is a poem that represents every Palestinian who suffers from, displacement, homesickness, and loss of identity. Darwish could not find himself new identity; therefore, he kept longing for his homeland. Being exiled and displaced make Darwish like any other refugee in a long search for a place where he can fit as a way to get rid of his sense of homelessness.

Importantly, Darwish who spent his whole life dreaming about his country has dreamed about the house that he lived in and wanted to make sure that every person knows about his house, to prove that this house belongs to him, although Israeli people sent him out of his country and his house. This house turned to be a holy place that Darwish will never allow himself to forget.

In "I come from There" Darwish says,
And a house with many windows,
I have brothers, friends

Darwish kept longing for his house that has many windows, this house is filled with sunshine, love, brothers, and friends, the warmth of this house stands in contrast with exile, with the coldness of his exile, as he says in "I Come from There":

And a prison cell with a cold window.

From his exile, Darwish kept telling the whole world that he owns this land, and no one can steal his memories from him, they may be capable of stealing his land and his property, but they are incapable of stealing his memories, he confirms

Mine is the moon at the far edge of the words,
And the bounty of birds,
And the immortal olive tree.

In other words, this holy olive tree proves his ownership of this land, as it is an immortal one and he thinks of himself as this olive tree. Darwish could not free himself from these memories. He imprisoned himself inside his homeland, this homeland belongs to him and he cannot accept his exile, he says

I learned all the words and broke them up
To make a single word: Homeland

Darwish forgot everything about the language except this holy word homeland; he doesn't care about the whole language if it doesn't mean one word, which is homeland. It is noted that the loss of homeland and the loss of his house caused Darwish to suffer from the loss of identity. Darwish could not find himself elsewhere, he kept insisting on having his homeland back again and all of his poetry was a kind of declaration that he owns Palestine and not anyone else, and because of this ownership he will never give up, and he will continue fighting for this right.

From the analysis of this poem, it can be said that protest literature helped Palestinian people let their voices be heard all over the world. Therefore, we can say that Darwish was a poet who spoke for his people during his life, and immortalized the Palestinian case in his poetry even after his death. Protest poetry could not free the people from their oppression, yet, it gave them space to talk about their sufferings in exile and to draw an image of their country to be known by all the people. In "I Come from There, Darwish concluded that non-violent resistance will never help Palestinians to gain their homeland back again.

V. FINDINGS

In light of the literary previous analysis, the paper has revealed the psychological effect of diaspora and compulsory exile suffered by all the Palestinians kept suffering of. The displacement of Palestinians caused them to keep thinking about their homeland. It also encouraged all the poets, and Darwish is one of them to keep writing about their country to

prove their ownership of this land. Darwish employed his words and poems towards one target, which is to say that he belongs there, and he will never accept any negotiations about his right of being in Palestine.

VI. CONCLUSION

In a few words, the current research paper concluded that this sense of nostalgia and homesickness did not let Darwish live peacefully. Also, Darwish was obsessed with his land, and he was afraid of losing his homeland. Besides, his poetry is considered as a record that will stay forever to tell whose land is this. Moreover, Darwish succeeded in his poetry to convey his message to the whole world about his historical ownership of the land of Palestine. Importantly, Darwish has proven to the whole world that words are sometimes mightier than swords since his poems have been read all over the world. More importantly, Darwish saved Palestine within his poems to make sure that these poems will stay, to tell the truth even after his death.

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