

RESISTANCE AND IDENTITY IN MAHMOUD DARWISH'S POETRY: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF TRAUMA STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the theme of resistance in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish through the lens of trauma studies. Mahmoud Darwish, a renowned Palestinian poet, often depicts the Palestinian struggle for identity and liberation in his works. This study will analyze how Darwish's poetry reflects collective and individual trauma experienced by Palestinians under occupation, using trauma theory to explore the psychological, cultural, and political dimensions of resistance in his poetry. By examining specific poems and employing trauma studies methodologies, this research aims to highlight how Darwish's poetic expressions of resistance serve to memorialize, resist, and heal from the historical and ongoing traumas.

Keywords: Resistance; identity; Trauma; liberation; Exile.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mahmud Darwish, one of Palestine's most esteemed poets, is renowned for his poignant verses that capture the essence of Palestinian identity, exile, and the enduring struggle against oppression. Central to Darwish's body of work is the theme of resistance, which permeates in his poetry with a profound sense of defiance and resilience. This article delves into Darwish's poetic exploration of resistance through the lens of trauma, examining how his personal and collective experiences shape his poetic expression. Exile is more than a geographical concept. You can be an exile in your homeland, in your own house, in a room. (Mahmoud Darwish.brainyquote).

1.1 Understanding Darwish's Poetry of Resistance

Darwish's poetry is deeply rooted in the Palestinian experience of displacement and occupation. Born in 1941 in the village of al-Birwa, which was later destroyed during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Darwish grew up witnessing the tumultuous changes that shaped Palestinian history. His early years were marked by the trauma of displacement, a theme that would echo throughout his poetic

career. In his poetry, Darwish confronts the forces of oppression and injustice with an unwavering determination to assert Palestinian identity and rights. His verses often depict the struggles of his people against the backdrop of political turmoil and conflict. Through powerful imagery and evocative language, Darwish captures the resilience of the Palestinian spirit and the steadfastness in the face of adversity.

1.2 Trauma Perspective

From a trauma perspective, Darwish's poetry serves as a medium to articulate and process the collective trauma of his people. The experience of exile, loss of homeland, and the daily realities of occupation are recurrent motifs in his poetry. These themes resonate deeply with Palestinians who share similar experiences of displacement and injustice. Darwish's poems are imbued with a sense of longing for a homeland that is both physical and metaphorical—a place of belonging and dignity. His evocative language evokes the pain of loss and the hope for a better future, encapsulating the complexities of Palestinian identity and struggle.

1.3 Symbolism and Allegory

Darwish often employs symbolism and allegory to convey his message of resistance. The olive tree, a recurring symbol in his poetry, represents endurance and rootedness in Palestinian culture. The nightingale symbolizes the longing for freedom and the power of voice amid silence and oppression. Through these symbols, Darwish transcends the immediate political context, offering a universal message of human resilience and the quest for justice.

1.4 Legacy and Impact

Mahmud Darwish's poetry continues to resonate globally, transcending borders and cultures. His profound exploration of resistance through poetry has inspired generations of readers and activists alike. Darwish's legacy lies in his ability to articulate the human experience of injustice and resilience, making him a timeless voice in the struggle for freedom and dignity.

1.5 Significance of the study

By integrating trauma studies with literary analysis, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Mahmoud Darwish's poetic contributions to the Palestinian narrative of resistance. It seeks to underscore the enduring relevance of Darwish's work in addressing universal themes of trauma, resistance, and resilience in the context of cultural and political struggle. This topic not only delves into Mahmoud Darwish's poetry but also connects it to broader theoretical frameworks, making it a robust and engaging research endeavor.

1.6 Rationale of the study

1.6.1 Understanding Historical and Cultural Context:

Mahmud Darwish's poetry is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of the Palestinian experience. By examining his work through the lens of trauma studies, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how historical events and cultural dynamics shape literary expression. Trauma studies offer valuable insights into how individuals and communities process and represent traumatic experiences. Analyzing Darwish's poetry through this framework allows for a deeper exploration of the psychological and emotional dimensions of resistance and resilience. Darwish's

poetry is a significant part of Palestinian cultural heritage. By studying his work, this research contributes to the preservation and promotion of Palestinian literature, ensuring that the voices and experiences of Palestinians are recognized and valued in the global literary landscape.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mahmud Darwish is widely regarded as the national poet of Palestine and one of the most influential contemporary Arab poets. His work has been pivotal in articulating the Palestinian experience, particularly the themes of exile, identity, and resistance. Darwish's poetry transcends mere political commentary, exploring the deeper psychological and existential dimensions of displacement and loss. (Jayyusi, 2008; Harlow, 2012). Resistance is a central theme in Darwish's oeuvre. His poetry often intertwines personal and collective narratives, portraying the Palestinian struggle for freedom and self-determination. Darwish's resistance is multifaceted, encompassing cultural, political, and existential dimensions. His works serve not only as a chronicle of historical events but also as a form of cultural preservation and assertion of Palestinian identity (Boullata, 2009; Naaman, 2006). "Identity Card" (1964): This poem is a seminal work that encapsulates the defiance and resilience of the Palestinian people. Through the persona of a Palestinian man, Darwish articulates a powerful statement of identity and resistance against oppression (Najjar, 2010). "The Earth is closing on Us" (1984): This poem reflects the existential despair and relentless hope of the Palestinian people. The imagery of a closing earth signifies the suffocating conditions of exile, yet the poem also invokes the possibility of resistance and renewal (Mattawa, 2014). "Mural" (2000): Written after Darwish's near-death experience, "Mural" is a meditation on life, death, and the persistence of memory. It embodies the enduring spirit of resistance through its exploration of personal and collective trauma (Alshaer, 2016).

2.1 Theoretical frame work

Trauma studies provide a framework for analyzing the psychological and emotional dimensions of Darwish's poetry. This perspective considers how his work articulates the trauma of displacement, loss, and occupation, and how poetry can serve as

a means of coping with and resisting these traumas (Morris, 2013; Assmann, 2012). Cathy Caruth: Caruth's work on trauma and narrative underscores the importance of storytelling in the process of working through trauma. Darwish's poetry, with its emphasis on memory and narrative, can be seen as a way of making sense of traumatic experiences (Caruth, 1996). Dominick LaCapra: LaCapra's distinction between "acting out" and "working through" trauma is relevant to Darwish's work. His poetry often oscillates between these modes, reflecting both the immediacy of traumatic experiences and the ongoing process of coming to terms with them (LaCapra, 2001). Edward Said: Said's writings on exile and cultural identity provide a critical context for understanding Darwish's exploration of Palestinian identity and resistance. Darwish's work can be seen as a cultural and intellectual resistance to the erasure and marginalization of Palestinian history and identity (Said, 2000).

2.2 Interplay of Trauma and Resistance

Darwish's poetry demonstrates how the articulation of trauma can be an act of resistance. By giving voice to the experiences of displacement and loss, Darwish not only preserves the memory of these traumas but also challenges the narratives imposed by oppressive forces. His work exemplifies the power of poetry to transform personal and collective suffering into a source of strength and resilience (Joudah, 2013; El-Hajj, 2011). Comparative studies with other postcolonial and diasporic literatures can further illuminate the theme of resistance in Darwish's poetry. For instance, the works of African American poets such as Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou also address themes of resistance and trauma, providing a broader context for understanding Darwish's contribution to global resistance literature (Smith, 2015; Gilroy, 1993).

2.2.1 Cultural Resistance

Darwish's poetry often serves as a repository of Palestinian culture and heritage. His use of traditional motifs, symbols, and references to Palestinian folklore underscores the importance of cultural resistance in preserving national identity (Boullata, 2009; Kanafani, 2002).

2.3 Exile and Displacement:

The theme of exile is central to Darwish's work. His poetry captures the psychological and emotional impact of being uprooted from one's homeland, while also exploring the possibilities of belonging and identity in the diaspora (Bardenstein, 1998; Khatib, 2014).

2.4 Memory and History:

Darwish's work emphasizes the role of memory in resisting the erasure of Palestinian history. His poetry often engages in a dialogue with the past, seeking to reclaim and reinterpret historical narratives from a Palestinian perspective (Slyomovics, 1998; Gana, 2008).

2.5 Objectives

- To explore how does Darwish's poetry serve as a form of resistance against oppression and colonization.
- Analyze how trauma theory can deepen our understanding of Darwish's depiction of collective and personal traumas experienced by Palestinians.

2.6 Questions

- How does Mahmoud Darwish's poetry challenge dominant narratives of oppression and colonization?
- What aspects of Darwish's poetry reflect personal traumas experienced by individuals within Palestinian society?

2.7 Methodology

This research will employ close textual analysis of selected poems by Mahmoud Darwish, supplemented by theoretical framework grounded in trauma studies. The analysis will focus on identifying recurrent motifs, literary techniques, and historical contexts to elucidate how Darwish's poetic language and themes contribute to the discourse on resistance and trauma.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

3.1 Trauma Theory

Collective Trauma: Exploration of shared Palestinian suffering due to displacement, occupation, and loss.

Memory and Identity:

Role of cultural memory in preserving identity amidst trauma.

Narrative as Healing:

Use of poetry as a means of emotional expression and psychological healing.

3.2 Delimitation:

The Researcher is bind to analysis and focus only three Mahmud Darwish's poems. Identity card, Earth is closing on us and A soldier dream of white lilies.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Finding: 1

One of Mahmud Darwish's notable poems that embodies the theme of resistance is "Identity Card" (also known as "Passport"). This poem starkly addresses the experience of Palestinians under occupation and their defiance against oppression.

Identity and Existence:

"I am an Arab

And my identity card number is fifty thousand"

The speaker asserts his identity as an Arab, a declaration of pride and self-recognition. This is significant in the context of resistance, as it highlights a determination to maintain and assert one's identity despite external pressures to assimilate or be marginalized.

Impersonal Identification:

The reference to the identity card number suggests a dehumanizing bureaucratic system where individuals are reduced to numbers. This can be interpreted as a critique of a system that strips people of their individuality and reduces them to mere statistics.

Family and Continuity:

"I have eight children

And the ninth will come after a summer"

Mentioning the eight children, with a ninth on the way, symbolizes hope and the continuation of life. It underscores the resilience of the community in the face of adversity, as they continue to grow and thrive despite difficult circumstances.

Future Generations:

The impending birth of the ninth child can be seen as a metaphor for the future. It conveys a message of endurance and the undying spirit of the people who, despite hardships, continue to look forward to the future.

Anticipation of Conflict:

"Will you be angry?"

Confrontation and Defiance:

This question is directed at those who oppose or oppress the speaker. It suggests an awareness of potential conflict but also conveys a sense of defiance. The speaker anticipates anger from others but remains steadfast in their stance.

Challenging Oppression:

By questioning whether the adversary will be angry, the speaker challenges the oppressors' reactions and their attempts to control or suppress the speaker's identity and existence.

Resistance and Trauma Perspective:

Historical Context: These lines can be interpreted within the context of historical and ongoing conflicts in the Arab world, where people have faced displacement, occupation, and systemic discrimination. The speaker's words reflect a collective memory of trauma and an enduring spirit of resistance against such adversities.

Trauma of Dehumanization:

The mention of the identity card number signifies the trauma of being reduced to a number, a common experience in systems of control and occupation. This dehumanization is a traumatic experience that affects one's sense of self and identity.

Resilience Through Generations:

Despite the trauma, the reference to children and the future birth signifies resilience. It is a testament to the ability of individuals and communities to endure and resist through generations, maintaining their identity and hope for a better future. In these lines, Darwish asserts his Arab identity proudly and defiantly, despite the attempts to erase or marginalize it. The enumeration of children and the anticipation of a new life symbolize hope and resilience in the face of adversity. Throughout the poem, Darwish challenges the dehumanizing

effects of occupation and asserts the right to exist with dignity and pride. "Identity Card" is emblematic of Darwish's larger body of work, which consistently explores themes of resistance, identity, exile, and the quest for justice. His poetry serves as a powerful voice for the Palestinian cause and continues to inspire readers around the world with its passionate plea for freedom and equality.

Finding :2

Another powerful poem by Mahmud Darwish that explores themes of resistance is "The Earth is Closing on Us". This poem reflects on the experience of confinement and oppression faced by Palestinians under occupation. Here's an excerpt from the poem:

Confinement and Desperation:

"The earth is closing on us, pushing us through the last passage"

Imminent Confinement: The imagery of the earth closing in suggests a sense of entrapment and relentless pressure. This can be interpreted as the ever-tightening grip of oppression or an existential threat that leaves no room for escape or reprieve.

Final Passage: The "last passage" symbolizes a critical juncture or a point of no return. It could represent a final chance for survival or liberation, reflecting the dire circumstances faced by the oppressed.

Sacrifice and Survival:

"and we tear off our limbs to pass through"

Extreme Sacrifice: The act of tearing off limbs to pass through highlights the extreme sacrifices and suffering endured. This graphic metaphor underscores the physical and emotional pain that comes with such desperate acts of survival.

Survival Against Odds: It conveys a brutal reality where survival demands immense sacrifices. This struggle is a testament to the resilience and determination to survive against all odds, even at great personal cost.

Resistance and Trauma Perspective:

Unyielding Spirit:

The determination to pass through, even at the cost of tearing off limbs, reflects an unyielding spirit of resistance. It shows a refusal to succumb to the oppressive forces and an unwavering commitment to persevere.

Defiance in Adversity:

Despite the overwhelming pressure and imminent threat, there is a defiance inherent in the act of continuing to push forward. It is a powerful statement of resilience and resistance against dehumanization and subjugation.

Trauma:Physical and Emotional Pain:

The imagery of tearing off limbs is a stark representation of the trauma experienced. It reflects both the physical pain and the deep emotional scars borne by those subjected to extreme oppression.

Psychological Impact:

The closing earth and the desperate measures to pass through illustrate the psychological trauma of living in constant fear and under relentless pressure. It captures the mental anguish and the sense of being trapped with no easy escape.

Collective Memory:

These lines resonate with the collective memory of trauma experienced by communities facing systemic violence and displacement. They encapsulate the shared experiences of suffering and the scars left by such ordeals.

Symbolism and Context:

Historical Context:

In the context of Darwish's Palestinian identity, these lines can be seen as reflecting the experiences of displacement, occupation, and the ongoing struggle for identity and homeland. The closing earth and the tearing of limbs symbolize the harsh realities faced by Palestinians.

Universal Struggle:

While deeply rooted in the Palestinian experience, these lines also resonate universally with any oppressed group's struggle for survival and dignity. The themes of confinement, sacrifice, and resilience are universal in contexts of resistance against any form of tyranny or oppression.

In these lines, Darwish vividly depicts the suffocating reality of life under siege and the desperate measures taken to survive and resist. The imagery of tearing off limbs to pass through conveys the extreme sacrifices made in the struggle for freedom and dignity.

Throughout "The Earth is Closing on Us," Darwish portrays the resilience of his people and their unwavering determination to endure despite the harsh conditions imposed upon them. The poem captures the psychological and physical impact of oppression while emphasizing the indomitable spirit of resistance that persists against all odds. Darwish's ability to merge personal experiences with universal themes of injustice and struggle makes this poem, like many of his others, a poignant and timeless reflection on the human condition in the face of adversity. It continues to resonate with readers who seek to understand and empathize with the challenges of those who resist oppression and strive for justice.

Finding: 3

A soldier dreams of white lilies

On the battlefields

And butterflies

Hovering over a garden

Beside his mother's house"

In these opening lines, the soldier's dream serves as an escape from the harsh realities of the battlefield. The white lilies and butterflies symbolize purity, peace, and the beauty of life, starkly contrasting with the brutality of war. The garden beside his mother's house represents a place of safety and comfort. This juxtaposition highlights the soldier's yearning for innocence and tranquility, elements stripped away by the trauma of war.

"He dreams of a song he heard

From a woman's lips

When he was a boy

It was his mother singing

Beside her house"

The soldier's dream shifts to a specific memory of his childhood—his mother singing. This memory is tied to a sense of security and maternal love, crucial for psychological stability. The act of recalling a nurturing moment from the past signifies the soldier's attempt to cope with present trauma by mentally returning to a time before his current suffering began. This act of remembering his mother's song illustrates how deeply personal and familial connections can provide solace amid trauma.

"He dreams of the light

Coming through the window

Of his mother's house

And he cries

On the battlefield"

The imagery of light coming through the window symbolizes hope and life. The soldier's tears on the battlefield underscore the emotional toll of war. This moment of vulnerability reveals the soldier's deep longing for the warmth and safety of his mother's house, a stark contrast to the cold, harsh reality he faces. The soldier's tears signify a release of the pent-up emotions and trauma accumulated through his experiences in war.

"He sleeps

In the grave of another soldier

And dreams

Of his mother's house

And a garden

Beside his mother's house"

The closing lines bring the theme of death to the forefront. The soldier sleeps in the grave of another soldier, highlighting the interchangeable nature of soldiers in war and the pervasive presence of death. Yet, even in this morbid reality, the soldier's dreams return to his mother's house and the garden beside it. This persistent return to memories of home and family underscores the enduring impact of these formative experiences.

From a trauma perspective, these lines illustrate how the soldier's psyche attempts to cope with the horrors of war. The repeated imagery of the mother's house and garden signifies a deep-seated need for stability, love, and normalcy. These dreams serve as a psychological refuge, providing temporary relief from the continuous stress and fear encountered on the battlefield.

In this poem, Darwish explores the profound impact of war on individuals, particularly soldiers who experience trauma and loss. The soldier's dreams of innocence and beauty contrast sharply with the harsh reality of conflict and death. The imagery of white lilies, butterflies, and his mother's house evoke a sense of nostalgia and longing amidst the brutality of war. Through evocative language and introspective imagery, Darwish delves into the psychological dimensions of trauma and memory. The soldier's dreams reflect his inner turmoil and the haunting memories of a life left behind. The poem highlights the human cost of conflict and the enduring scars left on those who experience it firsthand. "A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies" showcases Darwish's ability to capture the complexities of human experience, including the effects of trauma and the search for

solace amidst chaos and destruction. His poetry resonates with empathy and sensitivity, offering profound insights into the universal themes of suffering, memory, and resilience.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that, Mahmud Darwish's poetry stands as a testament to the profound impact of art in confronting and transcending trauma. Through his poetic exploration of resistance, Darwish not only captures the essence of Palestinian struggle but also invites readers worldwide to contemplate universal themes of justice, identity, and human rights. His verses resonate with a timeless call for dignity and freedom, serving as a beacon of hope and solidarity for all who strive to resist oppression and uphold the inherent worth of every human being. Darwish's poetic legacy continues to inspire and challenge, reminding us of the enduring power of literature to illuminate, provoke thought, and foster empathy as well as resistance across the cultural and geographical boundaries.

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