

The Land as Witness: Nature and Resistance in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish

Hamoud Yahya Ahmed Mohsen
Department of English Language and
Literature
University Malaysia

Fahad Ibrahim Al-Bakr
Department of Arabic Language,
Faculty of Arts, University of Hail,
Saudi Arabia

Abstract

On the 17th anniversary of his death, Mahmoud Darwish (1948-2008) remains a pulsing mind of Palestinian Resistance that stands the core theme of his poetry. This article is an exploration of the ways in which Darwish employs the nature as a subversive strategy for resisting the occupation of his homeland of Palestine. His poems, throughout his writing life that spanned fifty years, can be used to demonstrate how an ecopostcolonial perspective might contribute to an understanding of the poet's resistance to describe the suffering of Palestinian through his employment of nature. Through the literary lenses of both ecocriticism and postcolonialism theories of reading literature, ecoresistance is a new perspective in the Arab literary studies, a non-western viewpoint that puts Darwish's anti-colonial trajectory into sharp focus. The analysis reveals that Darwish uses the various forms of nature that range from the forms of the pure nature to the forms that have been cultivated. Darwish sows the seeds of resistance represented by productive use of the trees, valleys, rivers, animals, fruits, day, night, moon, sun, mountain, hill-just as nature relentlessly exists despite some of the worst human transgressions, so do the Palestinians remain ceaselessly understand in their fight for the return of their homeland as they shall piece the air and plant fertility in the dormant earth. This article proposes new insights into man's connection to land, and is a step towards opening up the field of ecocriticism as a pathway for reading Arab poetry of resistance.

Keywords: Land, Nature, Resistance, Mahmoud Darwish, Palestine

Introduction

Historically, the Arab poets have at no time in history been free from political and social commitments. Since period of pre-Islam, Arab poets have played a very important role in their societies. The Arab poet was the voice of his tribe and the tongue of his people. Mattawa (2009: 224) observes that the ideal Arab poet has always been embodied in the warrior poet who fought against injustice and oppression. This tradition of 'poet-warriors' seems to be common in the ancient Arabic poetry. The Arab poets, such as Irma-al-Qais, Antra Ibn Shaddad, Abu Firas AL-Hamadani and Al-Mutannabi, either were rulers or sought to become political leaders in their tribes or principedoms. In this vein, the Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish has embraced this kind of role played by the Arab poets since ancient times in the twentieth century. He is a fine example of the importance of the Arab poet in the contemporary Arab society. As Alshaer (2011: 90) points out "Mahmoud Darwish is the greatest Palestinian poet who made history by virtue of his poetic oeuvre whose prime anchor is Palestine and Palestinian history".

Many Palestinian poets focused their literary energy and poetic output in resisting the Israeli colonizers of their homeland. However, Darwish positions himself in a unique place among Palestinian poets for his employment of nature for resisting the colonizers throughout his writing life that spans fifty-years. The current research is an attempt to explore the different phases and faces of Darwish's resistance of colonialism of his homeland through the imagery of nature are an important area of scrutiny. In other words, we will analyze some poems of resistance by using a lens of ecocriticism. We will point out the role of nature as a subversive strategy for resisting the occupation of Darwish's homeland of Palestine. We have selected some poems which lend themselves well to the ecocritical interpretation and see how the poet engages the natural images as a form of resistance to colonization. In a nutshell, this article aims to advocate the ecocritical way of expressing resistance in Arabic poetry. It also shows that Arabic poetry has highlighted the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman world which is central the current area of ecocritical studies. The study too, prove that the ecocriticism is instrumental and workable theory to study Arab literature of resistance. Ecocriticism is a multinational, multifocal and multicultural approach of scholarship. Above all, since the Arab Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, is passing through his 14th year anniversary, we have decided to publish the current article as a green memory of the so-called the untiring poet of Palestinian resistance.

Literature Review

Mahmoud Darwish is one of the most significant poets in the Arab world who is intimately related to rebellion and homeland poets. He is considered as the crown of Palestinian poets of resistance. His contribution in introducing symbolism and imagery into Arabic modern poetry brought him into the front stage of developing Arabic modern poetry. Darwish was born in March 13, 1941 in the village of *Al-Birwa* in the northern part of Palestine. He became a refugee in 1948 when his family was forced to leave their homeland due to the Israeli occupation of the village in 1948. One year later, Darwish and his family returned from Lebanon to live as internally displaced refugees in another village inside Palestine. In an interview with the British *Guardian* daily in 2002, Darwish recounted (as cited in Bullimore 2008:1) "we lived again as refugees, this time in our own country. It is a collective experience. This wound I'll never forget". Bullimore (2008: 1) adds that

Along with more than 150,000 other internally displaced Palestinians, Darwish experienced the harshness of Israeli military rule from 1948 to 1966. Palestinians with Israeli residency or citizenship endured harsh restrictions on their movements, including being forced to obtain special permits to travel to and from their villages, limitations on where they could work, restrictions on their political and civil rights to freedom of speech and to organize politically. During this period, more than 80% of Palestinian-owned land within Israel was confiscated and placed under exclusive Jewish control and use.

This shows that Darwish grew within the context of the crisis-ridden homeland witnessing the unending conflict and the continuous struggle for independence and so Darwish lives through many changing experiences of homeland since childhood. The refugee childhood makes a resistance poet of Darwish and ties him to land forever. Darraj (2008: 57) observes that "he commenced his career with a poem about the Palestinian land, and ends his latest collection with a universal poem that places the

“un-reclaimed” land in a new poetic form”. Indeed, from birth to death, Darwish was closely linked to with his motherland. He was truly a man of Palestine and cared deeply of Palestinian affairs.

Darwish’s poetic talent emerged when he was still a young adult. He began to compose poems when he was still in school at the age of seventeen. With the emergence of Darwish, a rich voice is added to the Arabic poetry in general and the Palestinian poetry of resistance in particular. His first poetic attempt was a well-known poem addressed to his Israeli contemporaries’ schoolboys on the tenth anniversary of establishment of the state of Israel on the occupied land of Palestine. However, as a published work, his first poetic attempt appeared as a collection entitled *Wingless Birds* in 1960 when he was nineteen years old. His second collection of poems was published in 1964 entitled *Awraq al Zaytun (Leaves of Olives)* after which he is regarded as one of the leading poets of the Palestinian resistance. According to Hamidi (201: 32), Darwish tried to reach deep into “the Palestinian psyche, perhaps more intensely than most writers have been able to do, for the sake of capturing the core of the Palestinian experience”. As a poet, he was affected by his wide experience within his homeland and much more when he left it to live in exile.

Phases of Darwish’s Poetic Career (1958-2008)

Darwish was a six-year old boy when he forcibly left the homeland that had just begun to imprint itself on his heart, mind and imagination. However, he was sensitive enough to be familiar with its water, wells, flowers, fragrance, grass, groves, birds, animals and even its soil. He witnessed firsthand the suffering and struggle of his family from his early childhood due to the Israeli occupation of the land and the destruction of the village where he was born and spent his early childhood. In this context, resistance was implanted in his flesh and blood from the very beginning of his life. Hamidi (2011: 32) asserts that Darwish’s sense of resistance began to appear as a six-year-old child in 1948 when “his village was completely obliterated from the face of the earth” as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel. The current study presents a new division of Darwish’s writing life that spans five decades as the following:

Phase1 : Darwish’s Early Poems

This stage represents the period when Darwish was a young Palestinian poet under the Israeli occupation inside Palestine from 1958 until the early 1970. As I have mentioned briefly earlier, he started to write resistance poems when he was seventeen. Mattawa (2009: 229) explains the context of the early phase in Darwish’s writing when he remarks that

The underlying facts of Darwish’s life as a young man, such as the marginalized and oppressed status of his community, the state of linguistic and cultural siege under which they lived, the intertwining of poetry and politics, and his familiarity with the literature of the colonizer, shaped him. Emerging in the early 1960s and starting from a lyrical standpoint where a single voice expresses personal suffering, he set about to speak for his community as well as to reach out to his community’s adversaries.

However, the starting point of Darwish’s emergence as a poetic voice of resistance against the Israeli occupation dated back to the year 1958 when he was encouraged by his schoolteachers to produce poetry. Though the Israeli officer once abused him for reading the first poem in the school party, he continued to produce poems of opposition against the occupation of the homeland. This poem was the very first poetic cry of a

Palestinian schoolchild who has been oppressed by the Israeli forces from the very beginning of his life when he was still a six-year boy who had to flee with his family from his village to Lebanon. In this poem, he addressed his contemporary Jewish youngsters like himself who had the school supplies and educational possibilities he did not. In Darwish's own words (as cited in Al-naqqash 1969: 106), he states that

I can remember that I was a student in the eighth class when the tenth anniversary of Israeli was held in our school. I was required by the head master of the school to participate in the party. It was the first time I stood in front of a microphone to say poetry. I cannot remember the exact words of the poem but I can remember its main idea. It was a cry of a Palestinian school boy to his Israeli peer telling him that he has the opportunity to celebrate, to enjoy and to share his happiness with his family while I, Darwish, as I am a Palestinian boy cannot.

These early experiences of Darwish have become the power of words in his poems of resistance. The occupied homeland was and remained at the heart of Darwish's poetic production. When he grew up as a poet, he was regarded as the first and principal of the Palestinian poets of resistance. Darwish's poems in the initial phase that spans twelve years reflect in general the emergence of Darwish's use of nature for resisting the colonizers of his homeland. The first publication of Darwish's poems appears in 1960 in a collection entitled *Wingless Birds*. Four years later, the second collection of Darwish's poetry of resistance named *Leaves of Olives* was published. Jaggi (2002: 1) comments on Darwish's poetic production of this phase remarking that

His collections *Leaves of Olive* (1964) and *A Lover from Palestine* (1966) made his reputation as a poet of resistance. When he was 22, the poem "Identity Card" addressed to an Israeli police officer, became a rallying cry of defiance and prompted his house arrest in 1967 when it was made into a protest song.

In this vein, Mattawa (2009: 229) argues that Darwish's early poetic phase shows four aims that he intends to fulfill in his early poems of resistance. The first aim is to "speak and foster a collective consciousness" among the Palestinians in Israel and elsewhere. The second one is to help shape an empowered Palestinian subjectivity. The third aim is to foster exuberance and enthusiasm as opposed to melancholy and subsequently the fourth purpose is to demythologize the occupier of his homeland and to communicate with him. Despite Israeli oppression on Darwish and other Palestinians, Darwish's poetic voice remains active and he keeps on producing poems. In this period, Al-naqqash (1978: 119-120) feels that Darwish is not influenced by the contemporary Arab poets, instead he is "imitating the style of the other major Arab poets" of the age such as Badr Shaker Alsayaab, Sallah Adbulshakur, Adonis and Abdulwahab Al-Bayati. However, Tawfiq (1991: 14) asserts that Darwish is highly influenced by his "contemporary Arab poets" who tend to oppose the western colonization of Arab countries at that time such as the Arab poet Nazar Qabani. Shukri (1970: 394) observes that Darwish's poems of this period present a new model of Arab poetry from a new poet. He asserts that Darwish is a poet who lives his life in his poetry and when he writes his poetry of resistance, he records "a realistic state of affairs using the Palestinian nature of the occupied Palestine with a hopeful tone to eliminate the whole tragedy of Israeli occupation of Palestine" (Shukri 1970: 394).

In summary of Darwish's first poetic phase, he experienced the unpleasantness of the Israeli occupation from the very beginning of his life to the end. During this stage, he was arrested more than once by Israeli forces and he was imprisoned several times in

1961, 1965, 1967 and 1969 for his active poetic voice among Palestinians against the colonizers in the occupied Palestine. However, he never thought to betray the land in which he was born and among its beauty, he grew up. His homeland remained the main theme of his poems in which he interlinked the Palestinian identity and land through the imagery of every single aspect of Palestinian nature. However, the repeated imprisonments that Darwish was subjected to, forced him leave Palestine to live in exile for the next twenty-six years paving the way for the second stage of his poetic life of resistance to flourish.

Phase 2: Poems of Exile

This phase represents the period of Darwish's years of exile. It is a stage of rapid growth and development of his resistance through the forms of nature. Darwish travelled to the USSR to study political economy at the University of Moscow in 1970. A year later, he came back from Moscow to Cairo in Egypt. In 1973, he joined the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), resulting in Israel banning him from re-entering his homeland for about 26 years. He lived in Beirut where he edited *the Journal of Palestinian Affairs* published by the Palestinian Study Centre. He played a significant role during this period by producing many collections of resistance poems.

During this poetic phase, Darwish's resistance through nature becomes more reflective and influential due to his displacement from his homeland. What distinguishes this period of Darwish is the imagery of resistance through the Palestinian nature from which he has been displaced has flourished. By leaving his homeland, he has become a poet of both resistance and exile. He suffers from both homelessness and homesickness of a refugee. Therefore, his resistance has been intensified by being separated from his homeland. Accordingly, he produces the prevailing poems of resistance that is no less powerful than the armed resistance on the occupied Palestine. Though he has left his homeland during this period, his closeness and rootedness to it have predominated both his mind and heart, which in turn reflected in his poetic voice of resistance (Twafiq 1991: 37).

He produced powerful poems of resistance that hinged on the use of Palestinian nature during this period. "Ode to Beirut" (1982) and "A Eulogy for the Long Shadow" (1983) are examples of Darwish's poems where he used the Palestinian nature from which he is dislocated as a vital source of the images and symbols of colonial resistance as will be discussed in the chapters of the analysis of this study. However, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 led Darwish to travel to Tunis and Cairo and finally settled down in Paris for about thirteen years (Handal 2002: 1). Moreover, commenting on this particular point of time in Darwish's years of exile, Frangieb (2008: 24) asserts that\

Thus, Darwish has proved that his homeland is not a source of a Palestinian tragedy and hopelessness but an inexhaustible resource of inspirational Palestinian resistance and a mine of resisting poems that are hanging on Palestinian land and natural environment which play a vital role in supporting the armed resistance in the occupied Palestine in Darwish's viewpoint. In other words, one of the most important and common characteristics of this poetic stage of Darwish is that he has employed plentifully the images of Palestinian nature in his poetry of resistance. He also tends to use the Arab myths and symbols, even from the ancient Arab history. According to Yusuf (1985: 119), Darwish has returned to romanticism by which he was highly influenced before the age of fifteen. Contrary to this view of Yusuf on Darwish's poetry of this period,

Tawfiq (1991: 45) believes that Darwish built up his poetry as a product of images and symbols of Palestinian nature and made his poetry as an attacking weapon against the Israeli colonizers of his homeland. The Palestinian nature has not only kept on flashing in the poet's mind but they reconnected him to his homeland wherever he is and wherever he goes and in whatever he writes from a distance.

Commenting on Darwish's poetry produced during his years of exile, Najat Rahman (2008: 41) states that his poetry has long been preoccupied with the reflection of homeland. She adds that his later production precisely from 1984 until 1995 reflects "his exile from his physical home, his exile from the physical refuge and his exile in the poetic production". Therefore, in Najat's point of view, poetry for him becomes "a space of survival" after Beirut's invasion by Israeli forces in 1982. Thus, Darwish's connection to his homeland defines the work of the poet. He maintains a strong link with the homeland through his poetry of resistance from a distance.

Phase 3: Darwish's Poems upon Returning Home

This phase spans the last twelve years of Darwish's writing life. He came back to Palestine and settled down in the Palestinian city of Ramallah after about twenty-six years in exile. The gloom and sadness that pervade Darwish's poetry from this period are attributed to some personal experience of Darwish coupled with the political misfortune of his beloved Palestine. He has become fully preoccupied by his homeland and his poetry is filled with metaphors and imagery based on Palestinian nature and therefore, it can be regarded as the ripening of his attachment with his homeland in terms of using nature as a form of resistance in his poetry. His poetic voice of resistance has slightly changed in the sense that he gives a great deal of his attention to himself as a national poet of Palestine and to Palestinian nature as a poet of land and resistance of the Arab world. He also keeps on writing about the on-going Palestinian struggle for independence utilizing images and symbols drawn from the green land of Palestine. Darraj (2008: 78) observes that

If in his earlier poems of resistance, Darwish reaches the level of the poetic voice of Palestinian resistance and the tongue of the occupied land. His late poems have been elevated the universal level with special focus on his own autobiography within the Palestinian context and he has become closer to the Palestinian nature that has been highly reflected in his poetry of this period.

In 1998, Darwish produced another collection entitled "Bed of A Stranger" in which he addresses love matters between men and women. He comes into sight as an ordinary Palestinian citizen who has been suffering from the Israeli oppression. In 2000, a very striking poem comes out as a reflection and a portrayal of Darwish's closeness to his homeland and it has a wide range of appreciation among Palestinians and the entire Arab world. This poem is known as *Jidariyya* (Mural) published in 2000. Darwish has depicted a matter-of-fact picture of Palestinian dilemma and the state of Israeli siege in his poem entitled *Halat Hissar* (A State of Siege) published in 2002.

In summary, the discussion of the three poetic phases of Darwish's writing life shows that he has been profoundly concerned with his homeland to which he is closely interlinked. What I find stunning and utterly distinctive in his writing life is his concentration on a single broad theme of resistance through the employment of nature in his homeland. Darwish places himself in a unique position in his articulation of his

homeland throughout his writing life that spans fifty years. He employs images of his lost homeland from within his country and more keenly so when he was exiled from it and upon his returning home.

Darwish In the Context of Palestinian Literature

The Arab literary critics of Palestinian literature such as Kanafani (1966), Al- Khatib 1968, Al-naqqash (1969), Suleiman (1984), and Jayyusi (1992) are of the same opinion that Palestinian literature is an eminent part of modern Arab literature. The Palestinian poets of the first half of the twentieth century, such as Ibrahim Tuqqan (1905-1941), Abu Salma (1906-1980), and Abdulrahim Mahmoud (1913-1948) never rose to become famed poets in the Arab world of poetry. However, they started to receive some respect after the Palestinian *Nakbah* (disaster) of 1948 when the Palestinian resistance poetry began its responsibility in opposing the Israeli colonization of Palestine in 1948. Jayyusi (1992: 35) argues that though it is regarded as the third holy place of Islam, Palestine itself has never been the home of any central political authority and had not princes or patrons of art to help and encourage poets and writers at that time. However, after the Palestinian land was occupied in 1948, Palestinian Poetry of resistance has held the central position in the occupied Palestine and the major Palestinian poets of the period are highly preoccupied by the political and social situation in their country. Al-Naqshbandi many other Arab writers and critics argue that the years following the Palestinian Disaster of 1948 shocked the Palestinian writers into “stunned bewilderment” (Jayyusi 1992: 18). This proposes that Palestinian poetry of resistance began to prosper during the second half of the twentieth century in occupied Palestine.

The Palestinian literature of resistance emerged after the impact of the Israeli occupation of most of the Palestinian land, cities and villages. The Israeli government tended to annihilate the Palestinian homes and replaced them by the Israeli settlements. Accordingly, the problem of Palestinian refugees increased dramatically from 1949 upwards. Palestinians, like Darwish, were also buoyed by transformations of the Arab resistance movements and revolutions taking place in the Arab world during this period. For instance, the 1952 Egyptian revolution led by Gamal Abdul Nasser and war of 1956, the beginning of the Algerian revolution in same year, the unification of Egypt and Syria in 1958, and the revolution of 1958 in Iraq are some of the events taking place in the Arab world at that time.

The Palestinian poets in the occupied land like Darwish do not take into consideration the poetic innovations such as the modern *tafila* (free verse) poetry that were taken up by their contemporaries in the major Arab capitals and cities such as Cairo, Damascus and Beirut. Hardly any Palestinian creative writing was produced inside the occupied land (Israel) in the first decade after the Palestinian disaster. Palestinians writers in exile, however, had a better chance to follow up with developments emerging in other Arab countries. It is they who produced the first modern Palestinian short stories and novels, as represented in the work of Ghassan Kanafani, Samira Azzam, and Jabra Jabra. The diasporic poets such as Salma Khadra Jayyussi and Tawfiq Sayyigh contributed to the revolutionary modernization of Arabic poetry in the 1950s. The bridge in Palestinian literature between the inside (of Palestine) and outside of it (mainly as in the neighboring Arab countries such Jordan,

Syria, Egypt and Lebanon) occurred due to the obstacles that the state of Israel enforced on its Palestinian citizens.

Darwish first publicly appeared as a poet in grade school, where he read a poem addressed to a Jewish youngster like himself who had the school supplies and educational possibilities he did not. The news of the poem reached an Israeli military officer, and the young Darwish was brought in for questioning. Darwish's five imprisonments were sentences for poetic activity, such as traveling to recite his poems without being granted permission, or for a poem that was published in a newspaper. His poetry put him in direct confrontation with the Israeli authorities (Al-naqqash 1969: 110). In the first decade after 1948, Palestinians inside the occupied Palestine understood and fostered the power of poetry to fire up their Palestinian as well community in particular and the Arab community in general. Denied permission to organize to fight for their rights as citizens and residents inside the state of Israel, and refusing to submit to government censorship for publication, Palestinian communities in the 1950s began to organize poetry festivals which usually ended up culminating as political rallies and during which the poets and political organizers involved were harassed or arrested.

Darwish as a poet of resistance started to appear on the Palestinian literary scene in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His embracing of some of the more recent characteristics of the postcolonial Arabic poetry as he understood them along with the influence of Arabic revolutionary literature's emphasis on collective depiction of the experiences of ordinary, working Arab people, helped Darwish in a politically convenient manner. These approaches brought Darwish closer to Palestinians and Palestinian nature from which he depicts his images of resistance. The largely uneducated Palestinian population respected classical Arabic poetry, "but their poetry, the one in which they saw themselves most closely represented, was the vernacular form" (Kanafani 1987: 109).

Commenting on Darwish's modernity and uniqueness as a poet of resistance, Mohammad Abye (2012: 2) asserts that Darwish truly deserves to be called the poet of the Palestinian resistance as he sacrifices his life to defend his homeland through his poetic talent. He tries his best to popularize the Palestinian struggle for independence. He adds that Darwish has succeeded to make the universal appeal and evoke the sense of resistance among Arabs. In addition, Darwish symbolizes as no other poet does, the Palestinian resistance. He stands in much the same relation to the Palestinian struggle of his time for he is the first poet to use resisting words in his poetry. He realistically epitomizes the conditions of Palestinians under the Israeli occupation. Indeed, Darwish seems to be a keen observer of Palestinians' suffering in their homeland and represent it on a great scale. Thus, among the Palestinian poets, Darwish's standing as a poet of resistance is unassailable. In his resistance poetry, he is matchlessly defiant. Indeed, it would be perhaps less flattering, but certainly true to call him the father of the resistance poetry. He is indisputably one of the great poets of the Arab world, he has received a universal appeal, and appreciation for his connection to his homeland as reflected in his resistance poetry.

Forms of Nature as A Subversive Strategy of Resistance

Forms of Wilderness Areas

By the forms of wilderness areas, we mean to refer to the natural areas where humans the land is uncultivated by humans or the untamed areas of nature such as the forests and deserts. In the context of the current work, the deserts and the forests represent the forms of pure nature addressed and employed by Darwish to protest against the colonizers of the homeland. Resistance through these forms can be traced in his early poems such as “Death in the Forest”, “Three Pictures”, “On Perseverance”, “Promises from The Storm”, “A Lover from Palestine”, “A Letter From Home” and “A Voice From The Forest”. For instance, in the poem entitled “On Perseverance” Darwish addresses the untamed forms of nature as:

We will not be separated
The deserts are in front of us
The forests are behind us
Oh, my friend, take me

How can we be separated? (Darwish 2000: 22)

In the above lines, Darwish claims that Palestinians and nature are an inseparable unit. The deserts stand for the long battle of resistance and struggle faced by the people of Palestine to end the occupation and free their land. The forests symbolize the living and green landscape that support Palestinians in their journey of resistance. These images expose that Darwish believes that these forms of uncultivated nature are a nurturer and restorer, a force whose restorative qualities could support their resistance and provide refuge and shelter for Palestinians in their struggle to regain their lost land. The imagery also shows that the deserts and the forests are meaningful in the context of the Palestinian defiance to free the land.

The Form of Water Sources

The form of water sources is used to refer to the rains, oceans, seas, rivers, lakes and streams and other sources that provide water for life on earth. For the analytical purposes of the current research, the range of water sources mentioned above will be illuminated to show how Darwish’s struggle against the occupation of his homeland is mirrored through them. Indeed, Darwish employs a variety of water sources to further his struggle in his early poems such as “Longing for The Light”, “On Wishes”, “Rubaiyat”, “A Poem Which Is Not Green, From My Country”, and “To My Father”. To illustrate this argument, it would be profitable to examine the following lines from the poem entitled “On Wishes” which is a notable depiction of the human voice of resistance through the forms of water sources such the rivers as can be traced in the following lines when the poet claims:

The Nile will not tip itself into Volga
Nor Congo nor Jordan in Euphrates
Each river must have its proper spring and its course and its life.
Our land is not barren.
To each land, there is a coming.
Every dawn has its appointment with a rebel (Darwish 1973: 46).

In these lines, Darwish uses rivers to symbolize the wave of resistance that took place in many countries in the Arab world at that time. By using “the Nile”, he refers to the revolution of 1952 in Egypt against the British colonizers and that ended the British colonization of Egypt. This revolution is regarded as the mother of the Arab revolutions against western colonization of many Arab countries. Similarly, the other resisting and rebelling movements in many countries of Africa, Jordan and Iraq are symbolized by the Volga, Congo, and Jordan and Euphrates rivers respectively. The focal point of Darwish’s attention in this regard is that resistance is the companion of any colonization and land-occupation. However, Darwish asserts that every resistance has its own context. He becomes more specific to state that Palestine has also a fertile source of resistance when he says, “Our land is not barren”. Above all, he concludes with this prophetic message when he declares:

To each land, there is a Coming.

Every dawn has its appointment with a rebel (Darwish 1973: 46).

The two lines verify Darwish’s prophetic message of resistance through nature. The word “a coming” stand for the land-colonizers whereas the “dawn” is a symbol of protest against them. In the context of the poem, the poet means the Israeli occupation forces and the Palestinian resistance against them. The remark that to each land, there is a coming can be interpreted as a forward-looking insight of Darwish into what is happening the Arab world in three years after Darwish’s death.

Another example of this kind of resistance through the forms of water sources can be deduced from the image of the rain depicted in the following lines of the poem “A Poem Which Is Not Green, From My Country” when he declares that:

It will sing it will cry loudly

When the sky’s rains wash away

The spots of consumption, the thorns of fate (Darwish 1973: 21).

In these lines, the poet uses the image of the sky’s rain that implicitly communicates his protest against the occupiers of the homeland. The verb “wash away” evokes the sense of the massiveness of the Palestinian resistance that is symbolized by the rains that will take away the illegitimate occupation of their land. The water will once again cleanse his land of birth. This characteristic of purification and renewal highlights Darwish’s belief that nature will aid in their struggle against the occupiers who are described in terms of nature as the thorns of the land.

The Form of Wild Natural Forces

This form refers to the undomesticated natural forces such as storms, hurricanes and the winds. The analytical purpose of this study is to explore how Darwish uses nature in its wild aspect to probe the powers of Palestinian opposition to the colonizers of their homeland as manifested in his early poems such as “Promises from the Hurricane”, “Sadness and Anger”, “Promises from the Storm”, “Letter From Home” and “The Prisoner & The Moon”. The poem entitled “Promises from the Hurricane” can be regarded as a representative poem in which we can observe how Darwish utilizes the wild forms of nature such as the hurricane and the winter storm to inform the reader of the public unrest and the people’s protest against the occupancy of their land.

I shall go on serenading happiness

Somewhere beyond the eyelids of frightened eyes

Since the hurricane began to rage in my country
It has promised me wine and rainbows (Darwish 1973: 50).

In these lines, the poet employs the hurricane, a severe and often destructive storm, as a metaphor of the massive wave of the Palestinian protest that will attack the Israeli occupation forces and take its roots out from the land in the strength and harshness of a hurricane. The metaphorical use of the hurricane evokes the severity and roughness of the defiance that corresponds to the destructive nature of the occupation. The application of “wine” implicitly reveals that the Palestinian occupied land will reward him for voicing the voiceless struggle against the colonizers. The “rainbow” suggests many ideas. It highlights the many forms and colours of the Palestinian fight. The end of the rainbow lays a pot of gold. Although this is mythical, it highlights the fervent dream of every Palestinian that their fight is not for a worthless cause. They will eventually regain access to their land of birth and origin. It also signifies a new era of freedom, of a hope, or of moments of dismissing the occupiers of the land. Furthermore, it becomes a symbol of cooperative movements of resistance between Palestinians on the occupied land.

Accordingly, by using the winter storm as a symbol of opposition, Darwish hints that the Palestinians will storm the Israeli occupation to its core at the end of the day. However, his images become less forceful when he shifts to express resistance through the form of nature that is less in harshness and powerfulness such as the wind. For instance, the poet employs the natural force of the wind to symbolize the Palestinian resistance in the poem entitled “Sadness and Anger”, in which Darwish uses the wind to articulate his protest against the occupation of his homeland when he speaks out as:

The wind in your lips
Destroys whatever songs they made
Then why are not you angry?
While your voice O’ canary of the night
Does not please (Darwish 1973:37).

In these lines, Darwish employs the natural force, the wind, to symbolize the Palestinian resistance. Darwish sees beyond the external phenomenon, and makes the wind as a vital means of defiance when he shows how it is a destroyer of the occupiers’ settlements. This image of the wind reminds us of the English romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley whose approach to the west wind was unique and informative when he describes it in his “Ode to the West Wind” as:

Wild spirit, which art moving everywhere
Destroyer and preserver: hear O hear (Kumar & Tayal 2001: 345).

Unlike Shelley, Darwish utilizes the wind for resisting the occupancy of the homeland. His physical and mental intentions were to free the land and he proves to be the prophetic soul of the wild world of nature dreaming of the independence of his homeland to come.

The Galactic Form

The galactic form is used here to refer to the sun, the moon, and the stars that have been employed by Darwish to show resistance in his early poems such as “The Festival and the Sun”, “On Poetry”, “Longing for the Light”, “Rita & the Gun”, “A Naïve Song for the Red Cross” and “The Passport”. For example, in the poem “The Festival and the

Sun”, one of the earliest poems of Darwish, in which he celebrates the protest against the occupation in the occupied land through the sun as can be traced in the following lines when Darwish makes the sun speaks up for the Palestinian defiance:

The beloved sun never rose
In spite of the day’s insistence
The day was sunless

Can you imagine such a day? (Darwish 1973: 22)

The image of “the beloved sun never rises” reveals the sense of protest depicted through the natural form of the sun that does not rise in the occupied land. The second image of “the sunless day” evokes Darwish’s sense of resistance that is proposed by the gloomy situation in the occupied land due to the smoke caused by the Israeli fire and destruction on the occupied land that had prevented the sunrays from reaching the land. The expression “the day’s insistence” suggests the Palestinians’ constant efforts to resist the colonization of their land.

Likewise, the moon is also one of the most important galactic aspects addressed by Darwish to show opposition towards the colonizers of the homeland throughout his poetic career of resistance. In fact, Darwish employs the moon in all its facets in his poems. In the early phase, Darwish’s resistance through the galactic form of nature is shown by the image of the full moon. In the poem entitled “A Naive Song for the Red Cross”, the full moon is metaphorically depicted as food for the resisters’

When the sacks of flour are finished
The full moon becomes a loaf in my eyes
So, why my father did you peddle my chants & my religion
For crumbs & Kraft cheese

In the warehouses of the Red Cross (Darwish 1973: 52).

The image of “the full moon” as “a loaf in my eyes” reveals the extent and profoundness of the poet’s attachment with the homeland’s nature represented by the moon that becomes a source of warmth and support to him. Accordingly, he is able to carry on resisting even without food because nature will provide him with food of its fruits, shelter and warmth at night. The full moon can be also regarded as a symbol of the harvest seasons of the Palestinian fruits. Therefore, the Palestinian resisters need not to receive any food from outside and from the worldly organizations such as the Red Cross organization that provides food for the Palestinian refugees because Palestinian natural fruits will be enough for them to carry on their struggle. The poet depicts another image of the moon in poem entitled “A Letter from Home” in which Darwish uses the moon to show that the Palestinian resistance is still active and lively as can be traced in the following lines:

I am fine
There is a still vision in my eye
There is still a moon in the sky (Darwish 1973: 30).

The poet employs the imagery of the moon to symbolize the continuity of the Palestinian resistance that does not cease. In fact, the moon can be seen from the earth in its different phases. A full moon, a gibbous moon (between a full moon and a half moon), a half moon, a quarter moon and a crescent moon are the different phases of the moon in its visible form from the earth. However, when it is in the phase of a new moon, it cannot be visible from the earth. The implication of the imagery of the moon

used in these lines is that the Palestinian resistance never stops and it takes the various facets like the moon that never stops though it is seen in different faces from the earth.

The Forms of Flora

Broadly, flora refers to all types of plants that grow in a particular part of the earth. In the context of my study, flora is used specifically to refer to flora of Palestine. The most common types of flora in Palestinian land are olive trees, oranges, palm trees, the wheat, roses and flowers. Darwish has applied these forms of flora in his early poems for opposing purposes. Most of his early poems of resistance include aspects of flora to further the poet's ways of resisting the colonizers of the land such as "Identity Card", "He Returned in A Shroud", "First Date", "Three Pictures", "The Last Appointment", "Our Love", "Longing For Light", "Rubaiyat", "A soldier Dreaming of Lilies", "The Passport", "A lover from Palestine", and "The Challenge". For example, in the poem entitled "A Poem Which is Not Green, From My Country", Darwish symbolically demonstrates defiance through the forms of flora such as the flowers, the bunches of basil and the olive trees. These are the common forms of the Palestinian flora that he employs to show protest against the colonizers of his homeland as can be noticed in the following lines:

Our letter became a wound where dusk is swimming
In silence, it is breaking into bud the flowers & bunches of basil!
It will sing, it will cry out
When my country's olive trees blossom (Darwish 1973: 21).

Darwish makes the silent forms of flora speak up for the Palestinian struggle. The image of "our letter became a wound" evokes the poet's influential words of struggle against the colonizers and this wound is manifested in the forms of Palestinian flora that serve as the natural agents that will aid the resisters' in their battle to regain their occupied land.

Similarly, Darwish has a strong faith in the sustainability of the Palestinian resistance through the forms of nature as can be deduced from the imagery of the palm trees he portrayed as can be traced in following lines of the poem "A Lover from Palestine" when he says:

And you like the braided palm tree
Unbending to the storm (Darwish: 1973: 62).

The image of the unbending palm tree highlights the sustainability and strength of the Palestinian resistance to the colonizers of the land. Indeed, the "palm tree" symbolizes the Palestinians who are deeply rooted to their land and, therefore, they will stand firmly on the land like the palm trees that cannot be bended by the storms. The image of "the palm tree" can also convey a message to the Arab and Muslim community for sharing Palestinians their suffering and struggle as a duty of the fellowship of Islam. Once Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) asked his followers about the tree that resembles a Muslim and they kept silent. When they did not answer, he told them that it is the palm tree that is like the strong faithful Muslim. Darwish has applied the characteristics of the palm tree to convey the sustainability of the Palestinian resistance to the colonization of the land. Their faith remains unwavering despite the enlargement of occupation of their homeland. In summary, Darwish has succeeded in the

employment of the various forms of flora to reveal the germinating of ecoresistance in his early poems.

The Forms of Fauna

Fauna is used to refer to all kinds of animals that live in a particular place or area in the world. In the context of the current study, my reference of the form of fauna specifically means the most common types of fauna in the occupied land of Palestine such as the nightingales, the swallows, hoopoes, the horses and the sparrows. These are the types of fauna that are used by Darwish throughout his poetic life of resistance that spans fifty years. However, these forms of fauna are utilized differently to indicate the stage of resistance. For instance, in the initial phase of his resistance poetry, he often refers to the nightingales and the swallows to symbolize his nationalistic voice of resistance and further his patriotism while he was inside the homeland. The hoopoes and the sparrows are used in the poems of exile, as they are immigrating birds. The horses are employed at the final phase to reveal the maturity of the poet's resistance as manifested in his poems upon returning home that will be discussed in the eighth chapter of this study. The swallows and the nightingales are the most frequent fanatic birds of Palestine that are used by Darwish in the early poems such as "A Poem Which is Not Green, From My Country", "Our Love", "The Lanterns of Wounds", "The Passport" and "To My Mother". For instance, in the last lines of the poem entitled "To My mother", which is directly but symbolically addressed to his motherland and makes it speak up for the people's struggle to end the occupation:

I may share
With the young swallows
The road of return
To the nest of your expectation (Darwish 1973: 66).

In these lines, the poet identifies himself with the young swallows. The imagery of sharing with the young swallows the road to home sounds hopeful but the tone is full of protest, as the expectation of the occupied homeland requires them to resist the occupiers and free it. Actually, people tolerate the swallows because of their valuable role as insect-eaters. The implication of the imagery of the poet-sparrows attachment is to emphasize that the occupied land will be regained one day.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that Darwish uses the various forms of nature that range from the forms of the pure nature to the forms that have been cultivated. Darwish sows the seeds of resistance represented by productive use of the trees, valleys, rivers, animals, fruits, day, night, moon, sun, mountain, hill-just as nature relentlessly exists despite some of the worst human transgressions, so do the Palestinians remain ceaselessly understand in their fight for the return of their homeland as they shall piece the air and plant fertility in the dormant earth. This article proposes new insights into man's connection to land, and is a step towards opening up the field of ecocriticism as a pathway for reading Arab poetry of resistance.

Reference

- Abu Baker, R. 1997. Literature and Anthropology in Africa. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 1(17): 69-98.
- Al-naqqash, R. 1969. *Mahamoud Darwish: The Poet of the Occupied Land*. Cairo: Dar Al-Hilal for Publishing.
- Al-Quran. Undated. (trans.) Al.Hilali, M.T. & Khan, M.M. Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran.
- Alshaer, A. 2011. Identity in Mahmoud Darwish's Poem "Dice Player". *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 1(4): 90-110.
- Barbara, H. 1987. *Resistance Literature*. New York and London: Methuen.
- Darraj, F. 1996. *The Misery of Culture in Palestinian Institutions*. Cairo: Dar Al-fiqr.
- Darraj, F. 2008. Transfiguration in the image of Palestine in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish. In Hala Khamis & Najat Rahman (ed.). *Mahmoud Darwish, Exile's Poet: Critical Essays*, pp 57-78. Northampton: Olive Branch Press.
- Bullimore, K. 2008. Mahmoud Darwish: The Voice of a Dispossessed People. *Direct Action* 1(4): 1-3.
- Darwish, M. 1973. *Selected Poems of Mahmoud Darwish*. I. Wedde & F.Tuqan (trans.).Cheadle: A Carcanet Press Publication.
- Darwish, M. 2000. *Dewan Mahmoud Darwish 1-3*. Baghdad: Dar Al-Hurairh for Publishing.
- Darwish, M. 2004. *Al-Amal Al-Jadeidah*. Beirut: Raid El-Rayyes Books
- Darwish, M. 2007. *The Butterfly's Burden*. F. Joudah (trans.). Washington: Copper Canyon Press.
- Elmessiri, A. 1983. The Palestinian Wedding: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Palestinian Resistance. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12(1): 77-99.
- Frangieb, B. K. 2008. Modern Arabic Poetry: Vision and Reality. In Hala Khamis & Najat Rahman (ed.). *Mahmoud Darwish Exile's Poet*, pp 11-40. Northampton: Olive Branch Press.
- Hamidi. T. 2011. Bearing Witness in Palestinian Resistance Literature. *Race and Class* 52(3): 21-42.
- Hamoud Yahya, Zalina Mohd Lazim & Ravichandran Vengadasamy. 2012. Ecoresistance in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* 18(1): 75-85.
- Jayyusi, S. K. 2008. Mahmoud Darwish's Mission and Place in Arab Literary History. In H. Khamis & N. Rahman (eds.) *Mahmoud Darwish Exile's Poet*,pp. vii-xiv.Northampton: Olive Branch Press.
- Kanafani, G. 1987. *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966*. Beirut: Institute for Arabic Research.
- Manqoush, R. 2011. *Hypertextuality and Metatextuality of History in Selected Early Twenty-First Century American and Arab Fiction*. Ph.D thesis. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Manqoush, R., Noraini Mohd Yusuf and Ruzy Suliza Hashim. 2011. The Use of Historical Allusion in Recent American and Arab Fiction. *GEMA: Online Journal of Language Studies* 11(1): 57-68.
- Mohsen, H. and Hashim, R. (2014) Resisting Colonialism Through Nature: An Ecopostcolonial Reading of Mahmoud Darwish's Selected Poems.*Holy Land Studies* 13(1): 89-107.

- Maqdsi, M. 1993. Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) of Palestine. *Journal of Palestine Studies* xxii (4): 122-134.
- Mattawa, K. 2008. *When the Poet Is a Stranger: Poetry and Agency in Tagore, Walcott, and Darwish*. Ph.D thesis. Duke University.
- Nasser, H., & Rahman, N. (ed.). 2008. *Mahmoud Darwish, Exile's Poet: Critical Essays*. Interlink Books.
- Shukri, G. 1970. *Resistance Literature*. Cairo: Dar Al-Ma'arif.
- Tawfiq, H. 1991. *Mahmoud Darwish*. Beirut: House of Scientific Books.
- Tayal, S. K. & Anupama. 2000. *A History of English Literature: From the Age of Chaucer to the Twentieth Century*. Agra Educational Publishers.
- Yusuf, K. 1985. *Collected Works*. Beirut: Dar al-Awada for Publishing.