

The Narratives of Resistance in *Unfortunately, it was Paradise: Selected Poems* by Mahmoud Darwish

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Abstract: *This paper examines the manner in which Mahmud Darwish represents the Israel–Palestinian squabble in his poetry collection *Unfortunately, It was Paradise: Selected Poems*. The question that guides this work is: how does Mahmud Darwish project Palestinian resistance in the set collection of poems. It is hypothesized that on the backdrop of cause factors of the conflict and the suffering of the Palestinians, the poet projects exile, resilience and defiance against occupation as strategies used by Palestinians in their resistance struggle. Using the Postcolonial theory and its concept of Resistance Literature as proposed by Barbara Harlow, the paper, which is divided into two parts, concludes that the fight between Israel and Palestine is a key aspect of Darwish’s poetry as he uses it to show the sufferings of the Palestinians due to this scuffle as well as their efforts in (re)gaining their freedom. The work highlights the manner in which Darwish uses poetry as a form of personal as well as collective Palestinian resistance; thereby projecting the narrative on the role of literature in social and political resistance.*

Key words: Israel, Palestine, conflict, resistance, postcolonial theory,

INTRODUCTION

The enduring conflict between Israel and Palestine and its disastrous consequences has daunted the world and posed an enormous challenge to stakeholders in world peace. The terrible October 7th 2023 attack on Israel by the Palestinian military group, Hamas, and the consequent devastating Israeli reaction on Gaza is yet another shocking episode in this dispute. This paper seeks to examine the manner in which Mahmud Darwish, the Palestinian national poet and poet laureate as stated by Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché (Darwish 2003: ii), represents the Israel–Palestinian squabble in his poetry collection *Unfortunately, It was Paradise: Selected Poems*. The question this work seeks to answer is: how does Mahmud Darwish project Palestinian resistance in his collection of poems. The hypothesis is that the poet leans of the causes of the conflict and the suffering of the Palestinians to projects exile, resilience and defiance against occupation as strategies used by Palestinians in their resistance struggle. As far as the theory is concerned, the

Postcolonial Theory and specifically the concept of Resistance Literature as proposed by Barbara Harlow are used. Referring to Resistance Literature, Harlow states: “Resistance literature is not only a reflection of the struggle but also a part of the struggle itself, contributing to the mobilization and consciousness of the people.” (Harlow 1987: 12) This work aligns with this view as it analyses Darwish’s literature as a reflection of the Israel-Palestine conflict and also as a form of individual and collective Palestinian resistance; a vision he had from the Israeli national poet, Yehuda Amichai, whom he read as a child according to Adam Shatz of *New York Times*. (Darwish 2003: i). On their part, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin declare that: “Resistance literature is a form of cultural production that seeks to challenge and subvert the dominant narratives imposed by colonial and imperial powers.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989: 78) Darwish’s literature in general and his poetry collection *Unfortunately, It was Paradise: Selected Poems* in particular, is a form of cultural and specifically literary resistance to the Israeli occupation of Palestine which can be considered as colonialism as Munir Akash and Carolyn Forche declare that: “They [Palestinians] could not travel within their homeland without permission, nor, apparently, could the eight-year-old Darwish recite a poem of lamentation at the school celebration of the second anniversary of Israel without subsequently incurring the wrath of the Israeli military governor” (Darwish 2003: xix) Therefore, Darwish’s poems constitute an element of Palestinian resistance and confirm Said’s assertion that: “The literature of resistance is not merely a reflection of the struggle but an active participant in the process of decolonization, offering new ways of seeing and understanding the world.” (Said 1993: 210) The paper, divided into two parts, examines the manner in which Darwish uses his poems to present the suffering of Palestinians and their resistance strategies in the Israel-Palestine conflict; thereby corroborating Harlow’s declaration that: “The role of the writer in resistance literature is to bear witness to the atrocities of the oppressor and to articulate the aspirations of the oppressed.” (Harlow 1987: 15) The first section entitled “Projection of Suffering” seeks to analyze the poet’s presentation of the sufferings of the Palestinians due to the Israel-Palestine scuffle while the second part captioned “Resistance Strategies” examines the efforts put in place by Palestinians in order to (re)gain their freedom.

Projection of Suffering

In *Unfortunately, It was Paradise: Selected Poems*, the Palestinian Poet Mahmoud Darwish presents his perspectives of the Israel-Palestine conflict, with emphasis on Palestinian realities. One of the aspects he is keen on projecting is the ordeal the Palestinians go through as a result of the conflict. The poem “The Hoopoe” introduces the suffering of Palestinians thus: “We are captives, even if our wheat grows over the fences, and swallows rise from our broken chains.

We are captives of what we love, what we desire, and what we are”. (Darwish 2003: 31) This could be informed by events in Darwish’s life as Munir Akash and Carolyn Forche state that: “When he [Darwish] was six years old, the Israeli Army occupied and subsequently destroyed Birwe [his village], along with 416 other Palestinian villages.” (Darwish 2003: xvi) This implies that Palestinians are in bondage as they endure different kinds of suffering; and do not have freedom and choices of their own. And in such circumstances pain becomes a routine as Darwish states that: “Beneath us is Noah's flood, Babylon, broken corpses, skeletons, temples, and the breath of

peoples' cries for help upon the face of the waters. An end like a beginning, like the beginning of an end". (Darwish 2003: 35) This Biblical allusion highlights different categories of suffering. Consequently, this part will examine suffering in terms of death, exile, imprisonment and pain.

Death

Darwish presents death as an unfortunate part of Palestinian reality in their conflict with the Israeli. Such deaths are primarily a result of Israeli attacks and are highlighted in the poem "A Soldier Dreams of White Tulips" in which Darwish has a conversation with an Israeli soldier who killed Palestinian citizens. The dialogue is presented thus:

"I blasted them in the sand ... in their chests ... in their bellies.

-How many did you kill?

-It's impossible to tell. I only got one medal". (Darwish 2003: 166)

The soldier's use of the third person object pronoun "them" to refer to the indefinite number of soldiers he killed, intensified by the different places he shot them, indicate the gravity of Palestinian deaths. The soldier says it is impossible to know how many people he killed; and is disappointed that his authorities gave him "only" one medal; indicating that there are prizes for Palestinian deaths.

Darwish indicates that in deep pains, he asks the soldier to tell him about one particular death. And the soldier, fidgeting with a newspaper, says:

He collapsed like a tent on stones, embracing shattered planets.

His high forehead was crowned with blood. His chest was empty of medals.

He was not a well-trained fighter, but seemed instead to be a peasant, a worker, or a peddler.

Like a tent he collapsed and died, his arms stretched out like dry creek-beds.

When I searched his pockets for a name, I found two photographs, one of his wife, the other of his daughter. (Darwish, 2003, pp. 166-167)

The repetition of the simile indicating that the man collapsed "like a tent" indicates the tragic nature of his death. And in addition to the fact that he was probably a peasant worker or peddler as he was not a well-trained fighter, the Israeli soldier's revelation that he found pictures of the dead Palestinian's mother and daughter in his pocket add an element of pathos.

Another poem that projects the killing of Palestinians is "We Travel Like All People". In the poem, the poet says: "We travel like everyone else, but we return to nothing. As if travel were a path of clouds. We buried our loved ones in the shade of clouds and between roots of trees. We said to our wives: *Give birth for hundreds of years, so that we may end this journey*" (Darwish, 2003: 11) In this poem, Darwish perceives the struggle for Palestinian liberation as a journey. Unfortunately, they bury way too many people along the way and fear that they will all die without

reaching their destination. To mediate this, wives are encouraged to give birth to many children so that irrespective of how many people they bury, there will be some to end the journey.

The poet feels that Palestinians have been abandoned by those who could change things, probably the great world powers and the international organizations. He thinks that little action is done to complement the words about their suffering and death. He says: "Ours is a country of words: Talk. Talk. Let me rest my road against a stone. Ours is a country of words: Talk. Talk. Let me see an end to this journey". (Darwish 2003: 11) The repetition of the utterance: "Ours is a country of words: Talk. Talk" indicates the extent to which much has been said about the Palestinian deaths and nothing has been done to stop it. This explains why the deaths are endless.

It is for this reason that Palestinians prepare for their deaths as they know it can meet them at any moment. The poem "Neighing on the Slope" brings this out when the persona says:

"I prepare my portrait for my woman to hang on a wall when I die.

She says: *Is there a wall to hang it on?*

I say: *We'll build a room for it. Where? In any house.*

Horses' neighing on the slope. Downward or upward.

Does a woman in her thirties need a homeland to put a picture in a frame?" (Darwish 2003: 19)

This dialogue brings out pathos, not because the husband is anticipating his death, but also because there is no wall on which to hang his portrait; meaning that his physical memory will be wiped away. The rhetorical question indicates that those whose loved ones die, live with the pain of the death; and so, it is not just the dead who suffer but also their loved ones.

The poem "Mural", on its part, explains the fate of a dead Palestinian in the world beyond. After exiting the world prematurely without achieving his goals, the dead does not find fulfillment in the hereafter either, as the persona says:

Alone wandering through white eternity
arriving before my time.

Not a single angel appeared to ask me:

What have you done there in the earthly world?

I didn't hear the hymns of the blessed souls nor the sinners' moaning.

I am alone in that whiteness, I am alone.

At the gate of Judgment I feel no pain: neither time nor emotions.

I cannot sense the lightness of objects nor the weight of obsessions.

No one is there to ask: Where is "my whereness" now? (Darwish 2003: 119)

After leaving the earth prematurely as signaled by "before my time", the persona is disappointed that he does not find what he expected to see after death. He does not see the angels or any sign or heaven or earth; emphasizing his suffering as he might have expected some vindication after death in form of judgment.

Exile

In the midst of suffering and death as presented above, some Palestinians decide to save their lives by fleeing their homeland. This brings about exile, which in itself portrays hardship. Darwish lived this himself as Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché indicate that: “To avoid the ensuing massacres, the Darwish family fled to Lebanon. A year later, they returned to their country “illegally,” and settled in the nearby village of Dayr al-Asad, but too late to be counted among the Palestinians who survived and remained within the borders of the new state. The young Darwish was now an “internal refugee,” legally classified as a “present-absent alien”” (Darwish 2003: xvi) The trauma of exile on Palestinians is highlighted by the poet in the poem “The Hoopoe” in which the poet says:

We are the strangers and we, the people of the deserted temple,
have been abandoned on our white horses searching for our last station,
reeds sprouting from our bodies and comets crisscrossing over our heads.
There is no place on earth where we haven't pitched our tent of exile.
Are we the skin of this earth? (Darwish, 2003: 38)

This poem brings out the extent to which Palestinians go on exile as they have sought it in all parts of the world. He, however, feels that even in their exile, Palestinians have been abandoned and that is why he asks the rhetorical question which seeks to know if they are part of this earth.

The fact that Palestinians have been abandoned and are stranded while in exile is presented in the poem “Athens Airport” from which the excerpt below stands out:

Athens airport disperses us to other airports. *Where can I fight?* asks the fighter.
Where can I deliver your child? a pregnant woman shouts back.
Where can I invest my money? asks the officer.
This is none of my business, the intellectual says.
Where did you come from? asks the customs' official.
And we answer: *From the sea!*
Where are you going?
To the sea, we answer. (Darwish 2003: 12)

This indicates the ordeal Palestinians of all walks of life go through in the Athens airport as they seek exile. Most of them do not even know what their final destination is as seen from the vague answer concerning their destination. For this reason, they spend too much time in the airport without knowledge of what to do next. This is so serious that a young man marries in girl but they cannot find a place for their wedding night. The persona adds that: “Athens airport welcomes its visitors without end. Yet, like the benches in the terminal, we remain, impatiently waiting for the sea. How many more years longer, O Athens airport?” (Darwish, 2003, p. 12)

In a simile, the persona likens themselves to benches in the airport, indicating the length of time they have spent there. This is further emphasized by the rhetorical question in which he is asking how long they will continue to be there for.

This exile does not start with this generation as the poet says in the poem “We Have the Right to Love Autumn” that their fathers also “fled at knife point”. (Darwish 2003: 14) This indicates that different generations of Palestinians have been forced to flee their land, further highlighting the extent to which they suffer at home and in exile.

The frustrations of Palestinians in exile are further presented in the poem “Four Personal Addresses”. In the first part of this poem entitles *A seat on a train*, the traveller wonders what he will find when the train arrives its destination. In contrast to other occupants of the train who are certain about their next moves and what awaits them, Palestinians are in pain as they do not know what the future holds for them. Consequently, the train and railway constitute psychological torture to them as the poet says: “Why should we love the railway? We travel in search of nothing, but we don't like trains when new stations are new places of exile. Lanterns, but not for us, to see our love waiting in the smoke. An express train to cross the lakes. In every pocket, keys to a house and a family photograph. All the passengers return to their families, but we do not return to any home. We travel in search of nothing (Darwish 2003: 180) From this, trains have become a symbol of mental torture for Palestinians in exile. This is because while in the train, they know neither where they are going to end nor what they will find there. This is why the poet declares that unlike others who travel to their families and activities, Palestinians travel for nothing; after rhetorically asking if there is a reason for them to like trains.

This psychological pain of travelling in the train is also evoked in the poem “The Last Train Has Stopped”. In this poem, the train finally arrives the station and their fears are confirmed as the poet states: “Where can I free myself of the homeland in my body? Don't put faith in our trains, love. The last dove flew away. The last train has stopped at the last platform. And no one was there”. (Darwish 2003: 15) The persona finds it difficult to free himself from the hardship he came with from homeland, because suffering does not end despite the travels. And the fleeing of the last dove symbolizes the disappearance of the least hope they had. And that is why they arrive the train station and find nobody waiting for them.

Imprisonment

Imprisonment is another form of suffering Palestinians go through as a result of the Israel-Palestine conflict; and Darwish has projected this in his poetry collection. Prison experience is brought out in the poem “Excerpts from the Byzantine Odes of Abu Firas”. It is noteworthy that Abu Firas was a 10th Century Arab Syrian poet, who like Darwish wrote about Arab resistance and also went on exile. In this poem, the persona says:

An echo rebounding: a wide street in the echo.
Footsteps alternating with the sound of coughing.
Slowly, ever so slowly, they draw near to the door,
then away from the door.
Our families will visit us tomorrow. Thursday is visiting day.

Our shadow is at the gate, and our sun is in the baskets of fruit.

A mother reprimands the prison guard:

Why have you spilled our coffee onto the grass, you mischief maker? (Darwish 2003: 87)

This indicates the deprivation of Palestinian's freedom due to and separation from their families whom they have a right to see only on Thursdays. Even in prison, they are still poorly treated as can be seen from the guard's spilling of an inmate's coffee on the grass. The persona goes on to say that he is confined in solitude as he has nobody to share coffee with; and deprived of a seat and light in his prison cell.

Despite the imprisonment under harsh conditions, there is hope. The prisoner is deeply convinced that he will regain his freedom, probably because he thinks he is innocent. This is captured in the following lines: "I will come out of these walls a free man, like a ghost when he floats freely out of himself. I will go to Aleppo". (Darwish 2003: 88) In this situation, Darwish allows the inmate to speak for himself by giving the voice to the persona. And this aligns with Spivak's view that: "Resistance literature often emerges from the margins, giving voice to those who have been silenced and marginalized by dominant cultural and political forces." (Spivak, 1987, p. 45) Thus the persona, the prisoner, narrates his own prison experiences and relates his hope for impending freedom from captivity.

The prisoner is also given the voice in the poem "Four Personal Addresses". The first part of this poem entitled *One square meter of prison* presents an inmate presenting his experiences and struggles through poems. Despite the fact that his prison cell does not have light, the persona indicates that he is able to put down his reality in poems. He says: I wrote ten poems to eulogize my freedom, here and there. [...] I also wrote twenty satiric poems about the place in which we have no place. My freedom is not to be as they want me to be, but to enlarge my prison cell, and carry on my song of the door. (Darwish 2003: 179) It could be seen that imprisonment, an addition to taking away the Palestinian's freedom, attempts to take away his literary creativity by depriving him of electricity which he needs to write his poems. This reflects the happenings in Darwish's life as he ran into problems with the Israeli governor according to Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché as indicated earlier.

It is not only Palestinian men as seen above who are imprisoned in the context of their war with Israel. Women are also victims of this freedom deprivation as brought out in the poem "On This Earth". In this poem, the poet states:

"We have on this earth what makes life worth living: the final days of
September, a woman
keeping her apricots ripe after forty, the hour of sunlight in prison, a cloud
reflecting a swarm
of creatures, the peoples' applause for those who face death with a smile,

a tyrant's fear of songs". (Darwish 2003: 6)

This poet does not only indicate that women are also victims of imprisonment, but also underscores the fact that while in prison, the situation can get worse. This is the case with those who have been sentenced to death and are awaiting death; for whom they poet hyperbolically says a "swarm of creatures" is applauding them for facing death with smiles, probably because they think they are innocent.

Pain

In addition to death, exile and imprisonment as presented above, Palestinians also go through other categories of physical and psychological pain as a result of the Israel-Palestine squabble. Some of the pains are so visible that nobody then to talk about them before they are perceived as Darwish states in the poem "I Will Slog over This Road" thus: "I will pass the row of palms. The wound does not need its poet to paint the blood of death like a pomegranate!" (Darwish 2003: 3) This is the case with the wounds seen in the poem "The Hoopoe" as the persona rhetorically asks: "Is there a sword that hasn't yet been sheathed in our flesh?" (Darwish 2003: 43) However, some of the pain needs to be told to be seen. This is the case with the poem "Earth Presses against Us" which reads:

Earth is pressing against us, trapping us in the final passage.

To pass through, we pull off our limbs.

Earth is squeezing us. If only we were its wheat, we might die and yet live.

If only it were our mother so that she might temper us with mercy.

If only we were pictures of rocks held in our dreams like mirrors. (Darwish 2003: 9)

In this poem, the persona and others are trapped by happenings around them; and they seem to have no escape route. In order to navigate through earth, they must be willing to make painful sacrifices like losing their limbs. Their ordeal is so intense that they wish they were wheat that die and regenerate or pictures that have no feelings of pain; and truly wish the earth were their mother to have mercy on them and relieve them of their pain. This anguish is amplified by the anaphora "If only" which intensifies their suffering and wishes.

The poem "On the Slope, Higher Than the Sea, They Slept" equally presents the pain that Palestinians endure. In this poem, the pains of physically hurt Palestinians are brought out as the poet states: "On the slope, higher than the sea, higher than the cypresses, they slept. The iron sky erased their memories, and the dove flew away in the direction of their pointing fingers, east of their torn bodies. Weren't they entitled to throw the basil of their names on the moon in the water? And plant bitter orange trees in the ditches to dispel the darkness?" (Darwish 2003: 16)

This excerpt indicates collective pain that Palestinians bear in a group. Here, the boobies of the victims are "torn" and their fate is bleak due to the symbolic darkness that is impending. This is further compounded by the flying away of the dove that represents hope.

Equally, the poem “As Fate Would Have It: To Rashed Hussein” extensively presents the suffering Rashed Hussein, a Palestinian poet who died in exile, went through before his death. His pain was both physical and psychological. While in Palestine, he, like other Palestinians, endured regular Israeli invasion as the poet says: “It was a week for the homeland, a day for the invaders, and a time For my mother to sigh.” (Darwish 2003: 169) He and his people fought the assailant, and some of them were killed. But other would always come up to defend their land.

Apart from death, others were imprisoned, yet sons of Palestine from all backgrounds would come out to fight the invader. Hussein also suffered separation from his family as he used to visit his family only on Saturdays due to imprisonment; and faced regular police harassment. As a result of all these, Darwish says: “He only published two books of early poems and left the rest to us.” (Darwish: 2003: 171) The tribulations that Hussein goes through do not just ache him physically and psychologically, but also prevent him from pursuing his literary creativity properly, as perceived when Darwish says “He only published two books”. This is confirmed when Darwish says they met in the Cairo Airport and after just thirty minutes of talking Hussein said: “*I wish I were free in the prison in Nazareth.*” (Darwish 2003: 173) Shortly afterwards, Hussein dies in Egypt and Darwish organizes a funeral of palm trees and a eulogy for him.

The suffering the Palestinians go through due to the Israel-Palestine conflict elaborately presented by Darwish. Most of the fighting takes place in Palestine, which is under siege from Israel, resulting in physical and psychological pain for Palestinian fighters, their relatives and civilians. Equally, a good number of Palestinian men and women are imprisoned; and some are sentenced to death. Apart from those who die in prison, several Palestinians are killed during the fighting. As a result of the pain, imprisonment and death, a huge number of Palestinians flee their homeland; but exile poses enormous ordeals on them because to simply leave with no idea of where they are going to, who will receive them or what they will face in destination.

Resistance Strategies

The ordeal that Palestinians go through including death, exile, imprisonment and pain in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict as explained above triggers reaction from them. Consequently, Darwish presents the various individual and collective strategies implemented by Palestinians to resist what they view as Israeli invasion; and that is what makes his poetry to qualify as resistance literature as already indicated earlier. Darwish actually faced problems with the Israeli because they wanted to stop him from producing what they perceived, rightly so, as resistance literature. Darwish’s troubles of this kind are brought out by Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché thus: . During his school years, and until he left the country in 1970, Darwish would be imprisoned several times and frequently harassed, always for the crimes of reciting his poetry and traveling without a permit from village to village.’ (Darwish 2003: xvi) This is seen in the poem “The Hoopoe” in which Darwish declares that: “Poetry is a place of exile”. (Darwish 2003: 43) Darwish’s poetry, in addition to bringing out the resistance plots of the Palestinians, is an act of resistance itself and corroborates Harlow’s assertion that: “In resistance literature, the act of writing itself becomes an

act of resistance, challenging the dominant narratives and asserting the voice of the marginalized.” (Harlow 1987: 25) With regards to domination mentioned above, Harlow states that: “Resistance literature is historically specific and temporally urgent, emerging from national liberation struggles throughout the world in the decades following the collapse of European colonial empires.” (Harlow 1987: 2) The resistance strategies used by Palestinians will be presented below in terms of negotiation and appeasement; strategic migration; fighting and resilience; and spirituality.

Negotiation and Appeasement

Palestinians seek a peaceful solution to the conflict through negotiation and appeasement. This is exemplified in the poem “I Talk Too Much” in which the persona presents his consistent effort to talk with stakeholders in the conflict so that it comes to a peaceful end. Among other things, the persona says:

I ask: *Is it true, good ladies and gentlemen, that the earth of Man is for all human beings as you say? In that case, where is my little cottage, and where am I?*
The conference audiences applaud me for another three minutes,
three minutes of freedom and recognition.
The conference approves our right of return,
like all chickens and horses, to a dream made of stone.
I shake hands with them, one by one. I bow to them. Then I continue my journey
to another country and talk about the difference between a mirage and the rain.
I ask: *Is it true, good ladies and gentlemen, that the earth of Man is for all human beings?* (Darwish 2003: 13)

As seen in the poem, the persona is given the opportunity to present the Palestinian case in a conference; and he does so brilliantly, winning a three-minute applause from the participants. During those three minutes he has freedom as the conference approves of their right to return to their land. However, unfortunately, nothing concrete is done after the conference to transform words to action; and that is why satirically says he is probably disturbing them by talking too much. And ends up wondering if Palestinians are considered human beings with the same rights as others by repeatedly asking the rhetorical question “*Is it true, good ladies and gentlemen, that the earth of Man is for all human beings?*” This brings hopelessness to the Palestinians as they feel that they have been abandoned because they are not important and are less human than others.

In addition to speeches as seen above, Palestinians also seek a peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict by writing to the competent authorities for action to be taken with the objective of ending the squabble peacefully. Unfortunately, like the speeches, the writing does not trigger concrete positive reaction. This can be seen in the poem “The Hoopoe” in which their letters are sent back to them as the persona says: “And our letters are returned for us to rewrite” (Darwish 2003: 31) This is a serious setback given Harlow’s view that: “The narratives of resistance make a

demand on the reader in their historical referencing and the burden of historical knowledge such referencing enjoins.” (Harlow 1987: 80) Consequently, when Palestinians write and are not properly read, it hinders their move to end the crisis peacefully.

In addition to negotiation through communication, Palestinians also use appeasement as a resistance strategy. This is introduced in the poem “We Were without a Present” in which the persona, after presenting all natures of suffering they go through, recommends that: “Let us be kind, then”. (Darwish: 2003: 101) This kindness is directed to the other with whom they are in conflict. This is confirmed when the persona continues thus: “There is no "cultural solution" to existential concerns. Wherever you are, there is heaven for me”. (Darwish 2003: 192) Here, he is telling other Palestinians that they should be kind even to their enemies because they will be rewarded in paradise for that; after indicating that they face an existential crisis to which kindness, and not cultural differences, is a solution.

In the same dimension, “He Embraces His Murderer” highlights the apex of appeasement as practiced by the Palestinians towards the Israeli. In this poem, the poet says: “He embraces his murderer. May he win his heart” (Darwish 2003: 17) After this, the Palestinian asks his Israeli killer thus: “Do you feel angrier if I survive?” (Darwish 2003: 17) Embracing his killer probably when mortally wounded, in a bid to win his heart, is a great attempt by the Palestinian to appease the Israeli in the conflict pitting them against one another. The persona refers to the enemy as a brother as he asks: “Brother ... My brother! What did I do to make you destroy me?” (Darwish 2003: 17) He also asks the killer if he has grown tired of his embrace and his smell; and if he is also tired of the fear within his victim as a result of then unending conflict. Sensing that the killer’s answer is affirmative, he recommends peace by saying: “Then throw your gun in the river! What do you say?” (Darwish 2003: 17) In addition to this call for peace, the Palestinian adds that: “I will never cease embracing you. And I will never release you.” (Darwish 2003: 17) This indicates his unwavering desire to appease the enemy and seek a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Strategic Migration

Migration is another strategy used by Palestinians in resisting the Israeli. Unlike exile as seen earlier in which the people leave in a rush with no idea of where they were going or what they would do in the destination, migration has to do with well-planned movements with a particular destination in mind, as well as plans and possibility to return. This can be seen in the poem “The Everlasting Indian Fig” as perceived in this dialogue between a migrating Palestinian father and son:

Where are you taking me, father?

Where the wind blows, son.

a father says to his son: Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid of the whir of bullets.

Hold fast to the ground.

You will be saved and we will climb a mountain in the north

and come back when the soldiers return to their families in distant lands. (Darwish 2003: 65)

In this case, the migrants know exactly where they are going to and how they will get there; as seen in the father's assurances to the son. They equally plan to return when the fighting ends and the Israeli soldiers return to their country. The father assures the son that they will come back and meet their unoccupied house just as they left it; and he will grow to tell the stories of the war and their migration to others.

Similarly, the poem "A Rhyme for the Odes (Mu'allaqat)" presents the migration of several Palestinians due to the conflict. It paints a picture of people who leave their loved ones behind, take some souvenirs like necklaces and migrate. In this regards, the poet says:

They carried the place and emigrated,
They carried time and emigrated.
They lifted their fragrances from their bowls.
They took their bleak pastures and emigrated.
They took the words. The ravaged heart left with them. (Darwish 2003: 91-92)

The alliteration in the lines above indicate the great extent to which Palestinians migrated; underscoring the role of migration in their resistance struggle.

Darwish emphasizes the inevitability of migration as a resistance approach to the Palestinians in the poem "Were It Up to Me to Begin Again". In it, the persona indicates his determination to go on migration over and over as he says: "Were it up to me to begin again, I would make the same choice. Roses on the fence. I would travel the same roads that might or might not lead to Cordoba." (Darwish 2003: 5) Using geographical allusion to Cordoba, Darwish creates believability when indicating the migrant's firm conviction that he would go on migration again if necessary; though he adds that Cordoba will not be his destination. This implies that they are strategizing and evaluating their realities in a bid to make better decisions.

The use of geographical allusion with regards to migration is also seen in the poem "Another Damascus in Damascus". However, unlike the previous poem, the persona has already returned to Palestine as evident in this conversation with his friend: "Another Damascus in Damascus, an eternal one. I was unfair to you, friend, when you criticized my migration to a heartbeat. Now it's my right, now after my return, to ask you in friendship" (Darwish 2003: 25) The persona is addressing a friend who probably criticized his migration as not being strategic; as he moved from Palestine to Damascus which is also in crisis. Despite that, he has successfully returned and is asking his friend to forgive him as he says: "So let one half of your heart, friend, join one half of mine. Let us create a strong and farseeing heart for her, for me, for you." (Darwish 2003: 25)

This implies that migration is a key element of the resistance by Palestinians against the Israeli invaders. They consider their options; plan their movements; decide their destinations; put in place their return plans; and constantly evaluate and improve their plans.

Fighting and Resilience

Apart from the peaceful approaches presented above, Palestinians use violence in form of fighting in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This is presented by Darwish as Palestinians constitute armed forces to confront the Israeli as part of their resistance. This is seen in the poem “A Soldier Dreams of White Tulips” which projects the realities of Palestinian soldiers in the war. The poet presents the tears of a soldier’s mother as he is being taken to the war front; as well as the anguish in his voice. He also presents a conversation he had with an Israeli soldier who had killed some Palestinian fighters. When the poet asks the Israeli if he regrets killing the numerous Palestinian soldiers whom the Israeli himself described as peasants with no military training, the Israeli says: “I was there like a machine spitting hellfire and death, turning space into a black bird.” (Darwish 2003: 167) This simile illustrates not only the emotional detachment of the Israeli from the murder of Palestinians but also the extent to which Palestinians were killed.

This probably explains the lack of motivation to fight by another Palestinian soldier as presented by the poet in the following dialogue:

*Are you off? What about the homeland?
Give me a break, he replied.
I dream of white tulips, streets of song, a house of light.
I need a hind heart, not a bullet.
I need a bright day, not a mad, fascist moment of triumph.
I need a child to cherish'a day of laughter, not a weapon of war.
I came to live for rising suns, not to witness their setting.* (Darwish 2003: 167-168)

Clearly, the Palestinian fighter would have preferred not to fight. This is emphasized by the anaphoric use of “I need a” after which he mentions numerous things he would prefer to do; instead of fighting. This implies that unlike what some may think, all soldiers, in this case Palestinian fighters are not enthusiastic about fighting and killing others. And this aligns with Bhabha’s declaration that: “Resistance literature serves as a counter-discourse, challenging the hegemonic power structures and offering alternative visions of history and society.” (Bhabha 1994: 112) This is arguably Darwish’s objective in this poem.

On the contrary, the soldier in “In This Hymn” show high spirits even after one of them has just been killed. They raise the slain soldier’s shirt as a sign of victory and pray for peace to be upon his soul; while indicating their determination to continue fighting. They wonder how the soldier’s death will affect his mother; and what the invaders will say about killing him. After all these, the persona says: “But we will survive because life is life.” (Darwish 2003: 34) This underscores their determination and fearlessness as they seek to resist Israel.

These attitudes by Palestinian soldier is equally presented in the poem "I Will Slog over This Road". In this poem, Darwish metaphorically refers to the war between Israel and Palestine as a road, as perceived by Palestinian fighters. The persona in this poem is determined to fight till the end as he declares that: "I will slog over this endless road to its end. Until my heart stops, I will slog over this endless, endless road with nothing to lose but the dust [...] Whether this earth comes to an end or not, we'll slog over this endless road. More tense than a bow. Our steps, be arrows. Where were we a moment ago?" (Darwish 2003: 3) This illustrates the fighter's determination to fight till death in an attempt to resist Israel. He indicates that whatever happens to him, he will keep fighting because he has nothing to lose; probably meaning that he has lost loved ones and property to such an extent that he feels he has nothing to live for.

Spirituality

One of the methods used by Palestinians to resist Israel is spirituality. As they use other approaches, and especially when such approaches seem to fail, Palestinians take solace in the metaphysical. This is clearly brought out in the poem "The Hoopoe" in which the persona rhetorically how they will praise God, who demands to be worshipped, when their tongues have been torn in the conflict thus: "Take us. Our tongue is torn, so how can we praise Him who is asking for praise?" (Darwish 2003: 35) In this utterance, the persona seems to blame God for abandoning him during his ordeal in the conflict. But he does not lose hope in the Lord as he says: "Soar with us! Nothing is left of us save our journey to him. To Him only we complain of what we suffer on this road." (Darwish 2003: 36) The persona sounds a note of pessimism with regards to the conflict and every other thing around him; leaving him with only spirituality as his hope. This is perceived from the fact that the only thing left for him is the journey to his God.

This dimension is also presented by Darwish in the poem "The Lute of Ismael". In this poem, the persona indicates that the Biblical Ismael used to visit them at night and sing songs of encouragement as they fight for resistance. This is captured in the following utterances by Ismael:

O stranger, I am a stranger and you are like me.
O stranger, far from home, go back.
O lute, bring back what is lost, and sacrifice over you
from jugular to jugular.
Alleluia!
Alleluia!
Everything will begin again. (Darwish, 2003, p. 70)

These words from Ismael to the Palestinian are full of motivation and encouragement. After likening the Palestinian to himself, Ismael encourages him to go back home and sacrifice in order to regain what he has lost in the conflict. And this is punctuated by "Alleluia!" which is a key aspect of prayer to many people in the Christian domain.

Prayer is also evoked in the poem “Mural” the persona has a confrontation with Satan, who wants to lead him astray; and tells Satan to leave him alone because he wants to go to Heaven after all he has endured in this world. The persona insists that in his death there is a certain life because he has faced all kinds of suffering in this world before declaring that:

Nothing abides forever.
A time to be born
and a time to die,
a time to speak
and a time to keep silent,
a time for war
and a time for peace.
All is bound to pass.
All rivers flow to the sea,
yet the sea is not filled.
Nothing abides forever.
All is bound to die,
yet death is not filled. (Darwish, 2003, pp. 155-156)

The persona hinges his hopes on spirituality and contends that time will solve all problems because nothing lasts forever; not even the war and suffering among others that constitute their reality. Darwish’s presentation of the spiritual dimension of the Palestinian resistance concords with Ngugi’s affirmation that: “The narratives of resistance are characterized by their emphasis on collective identity and solidarity, often drawing on indigenous cultural forms and traditions.” (Ngugi 1986: 88) In this case, the believe in God Almighty with death leading to paradise or hell, as well as the power of God to do things viewed as impossible, constitute a key element of Palestinian resistance because it affects their actions on earth regarding the conflict but also shapes their behaviour as they seek to fare well after death.

CONCLUSION

Mahmoud Darwish’s *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems* uses powerful imagery and lyrical language to articulate the Palestinian struggle for identity and homeland; and convey the pain of dispossession and invasion. It is not only a testament to his personal and collective Palestinian resistance but also a critique of political oppression and cultural erasure. This work projects discussions on the role of literature in social and political resistance by analyzing Darwish’s representation of Palestinian resistance in the Israel-Palestine conflict. In the first part, it examines the hardship the Palestinians go through in the conflict in terms of death, exile, imprisonment and pain. The second part analyzes the resistance strategies used by Palestinians which include negotiation and appeasement; strategic migration; fighting and resilience; and spirituality. This work affirms that Mahmoud Darwish’s set collection constitutes resistance

literature she uses it to represent the Israel-Palestine conflict from a Palestinian perspective; by highlighting the Palestinians go through as well as their individual and collective resistance strategies.

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