



## Identity and Land in Mahmoud Darwish's Selected Poems:

### An Ecopostcolonial Reading

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Received: 25-06- 2012

Accepted: 29-07- 2012

Published: 01-11- 2012

doi:10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.6p.7

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.6p.7>

#### Abstract

The search for identity and the sense of the loss of land seem to be vital aspects in Mahmoud Darwish's poetry of resistance. His poetry is populated with a continuous but unique cry for the loss of Palestinian identity and land. His poems such as "Identity Card", "the Passport", "To My Mother", "To My Father", "A Lover from Palestine" and "On Perseverance" are highly praised in Arabic poetry because they embody emblems of the interconnectedness between identity and land. This paper aims at analyzing how Darwish links between identity and land in these poems from an ecopostcolonial perspective and the extent to which they share a common ground as both entail a mode of resistance to the occupiers of the poet's homeland. By explicating the link between identity and land in Darwish's selected poems, we can implant a new awareness of man's connection to land.

**Keywords:** identity, land, ecopostcolonial, Mahmoud Darwish and resistance poetry

#### 1. Introduction

Identity and land are firmly established themes throughout the Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish's poetry of resistance. Spanning a writing life of fifty years, his early poetry of resistance is marked by a declarative and definitive voice that draws attention to the symbolic land and formulates Palestinian identity primarily as it is closely attached to Palestinian land which has been occupied since 1948 (Sylvain,2009). According to Alshaer (2011), in 1948, Mahmoud Darwish was six years old when he encountered his first exile due to Israeli occupation of his homeland. He became a refugee from a landscape that had just started to imprint itself on his



imagination. However, such separation from homeland has given birth, on the one hand, to his poetry of resistance and, on the other hand, to that strong inseparability of identity and land depicted tactfully in his poems such as “Identity card”, “The passport”, “To My Mother”, Indeed, these poems of Darwish portray aspects of Palestinian scene where identity and land are intermingled. Darwish himself declares once (as cited in Celik, 2008:275) that his poems do not deliver mere images and metaphors of Palestinians but deliver landscapes, villages, fields and even deliver a place. He says, “I find myself looking at an olive tree, and as I am looking at it, it transforms itself before my eyes into a symbol of our struggle and loss” (Celik, 2008). This statement of Darwish testifies to a maturity of vision that stems from his consideration of the interconnectedness of Palestinian identity and land. By evoking the fauna and flora that make up Palestine, Darwish articulates more keenly his attachment to that one particular place in the Arab world, the place where he was born, the place he loves and the place he has lost (Elmessiri, 1981).

In this paper, we attempt to examine some selected poems of Darwish as they portray many motifs of identity and land, embodying symbols of their interconnectedness. The selected poems such as “Identity Card”, “The Passport”, “To My Mother”, “To My Father”, “A Lover from Palestine” and “On Perseverance” are regarded as a rallying cry for the Palestinian masses. These poems, which were written in Darwish’s youthful nationalistic phase of resistance, bear witness to Israel’s disgraceful way of dealing with the Palestinian individual, who must carry an identity card. Prior to Israeli occupation, the issue of identification did not arise. The identity card, a matter of great humiliation and discrimination, defiantly becomes a matter of great pride and dignity to Palestinians and makes them closely connected to their homeland that has been occupied since 1948.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Darwish as a Palestinian Voice of identity and land

It is crucial to understand how Darwish became an important force in Arab poetry of resistance. Darwish’s poetic talent emerged when he was still a youth. He began to compose poems when he was still in school. His first poetic attempt *Wingless Birds* appeared in 1960 when he was nineteen years old. His second collection of poems was published in 1964 was entitled *Awraq al Zaytun* (The Leaves of Olives) after the publication of which he is regarded as one of the leading poets of the Palestinian resistance. According to Hamidi (2011:32), “Darwish as a poet has tried to reach deep inside the Palestinian Psyche, perhaps more intensely than most writers have been able to capture the core of Palestinian identity and its closeness to the occupied land of Palestine”. Darwish was merely a six-year old boy in 1948 when he became a refugee from the landscape that had just began to imprint itself on his heart, mind and imagination. He was sensitive enough to be familiar with its water, wells, roses, fragrance, grass, groves and even the silent music of its soil (Alshaer (2011:92). He witnessed his family’s suffering and struggle 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 infancy peacefully.

In this context, resistance was embedded in his flesh and blood when he was still a little child of the Palestinian farming family. In other words, Darwish’s personal feelings of resistance began when, as a six-year-old child, in 1948, his village was completely obliterated from the face of the earth because of the illegal occupation followed by the establishment of the state of Israel (Hamidi, 2011). When he grew up as a poet, he was regarded as the first and pioneer of the Palestinian resistance poets. His poetry reflects his unique voice of resistance against the occupier of his homeland to which he and Palestinians are interconnected as if they were in a blood- relationship.

### 2.2 A Brief Review of Identity and Land in Darwish’s Poetry of Resistance

Antoon (2008) argues that Darwish discovered the power of words early on and wrote fierce poems of resistance and love of land. He goes on stating that Darwish’s poem “Identity Card” 1964 has an unforgettable refrain “*write down, I am an Arab!*” This repetition forms a cry that crystallizes, on the one hand, the connection between the Palestinian identity and land, and on the other hand, the Palestinian resistance against Israeli attempts to erase the Palestinian identity in the occupied land. The Palestinian identity has always been at the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict not only because it inextricably links Palestinians with their homeland but because it is also a means of resistance. It is a constant reminder of what was taken away from the Palestinians and a symbol of the ongoing conflict with Israel for their right of existence.

Alshaer (2011) asserts that Darwish contributes definitively to the formation of Palestinian identity and Palestinian people are addressed and marked prominently in his poetry of resistance as closely linked to their land the loss of which results in the loss of identity. He adds that Darwish’s poetry starting from his poem “Identity Card” treats identity in a manner that is convincing, sociopolitical and above all humanistic.



Furthermore, the genius of Darwish bonds artistically the Palestinian identity to the occupied land of Palestine. By making such a connection, Darwish gives a voice to the voiceless, breathes life and gives hope where there is despair, and above all evokes a strong sense of resistance among his people to strike and not to yield in their struggle to free their occupied land. Therefore, he merges the identity and land to form an interconnected form of resistance to the occupier of his homeland. According to Hamoud et al, (2012) nature and Palestinian people are interrelated in the context of resistance to the colonizers of their homeland. They add that the loss of land brings out the poetry of resistance. This implies that ecoresistance comes out due to such inseparability of Palestinians and their homeland.

Khalidi (1997) argues that the most basic issues raised by the Palestinian identity are illustrated on the actual land of Palestine and manifested in the Palestinian suffering at borders and checkpoints. What happens to them at these check points in their own land or outside brings to them the feeling of their loss of their homeland. He even asserts that the six million Palestinians are discriminated at these borders and barriers and the special treatment they received by others forcefully reminds them of their identity which is linked to their land and are echoed in the resistance poetry of Darwish. Indeed, whatever Khalidi and many scholars these days trying to prove for us has been specified and illustrated clearly thirty- four years ago in Darwish's poems of resistance such as the ones selected for this paper. According to Hamidi (2011:34), Darwish carries on building his poetic oeuvre that is inextricably linked Palestinian identity and his homeland that has been occupied by Israel since 1948. He asserts that Darwish concerns himself more and more with the origins of the Palestinian people and their inseparability from the land. This idea has been reflected in Darwish's public speech on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the occupation of Palestine, in which he declares (as cited in Hamidi 2011):

We, the Palestinian, offspring of this scared land. Declare our resounding presence in time and place.  
We have refused to adopt their version of our history. In addition, we remain advocates and witnesses of authentic narrative of Palestinian fortitude and will to live.

Darwish was an activist who tirelessly championed the integrity between Palestinians and their occupied land. This kind of link is mirrored in his poetry of resistance and more obviously in the six poems selected of this paper. Furthermore, the existential ecoresistance that reverberates through Darwish's poems is a compelling appeal for Palestinian identity as well as their land. This means that Darwish does not disengage identity from its land. Instead, he performs a twinning representation of identity and land (Sylvain, 2009:138). This kind of twinning depiction in Darwish's poems of resistance will be clarified in the analysis of the selected poems for this paper.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Since the early 1990s, scholars have been working cooperatively to bridge between the new approach of ecocriticism and the postcolonial theory. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996: xviii) define ecocriticism as "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between Literature and the physical environment". However, Estok (2005) argues that:

Ecocriticism is more than simply the study of nature or natural things in literature, rather, it is any approach that is committed to make change by analyzing the function (thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise) of the natural environment in relation to humans, or aspects of it, represented in documents that contribute to material practices in material worlds (p.16-17).

In addition, ecocritics have applied the basic ideas of ecology in their research and link it to humans (Yu, 2011). Scholars such as Arne Naess, Kenneth Burke, Cheryll Glotfelty and Aldo Leopold have all made major contributions to the development of ecocriticism. Ecocritics are against anthropocentrism that is defined as human beings' pursuit for better material living conditions, at the expense of causing disequilibrium of ecology. They recommend uniting humans and nature for the sake of reducing the current environmental crisis of the world. The theoretical concepts have been adapted carefully under the umbrella term of ecoresistance in the resistance poetry of Darwish. It is a conceptual blending of ecocriticism and postcolonialism as a new analytical lens for reading Darwish's poetry of resistance. Furthermore, the current theoretical framework is based on the premise that the postcolonial scholars have been assiduously attentive to the relations between colonized and colonizers and address themes such as the formation of identity of colonized people, paying little attention to the natural environment that has a direct link with the human identity. Likewise, the scholars of ecocriticism have tended to focus on the relations between nature and culture, neglecting the aspects of post colonialism that help



shape the humans' interaction and interrelations with their natural environment. Therefore, the ecopostcolonial lens used in this paper is intended to serve as a bridge between ecocriticism and postcolonialism and used as a new analytical lens for reading Darwish's poems. Thus, it is advocated in the current paper to merge or integrate some features of ecocriticism and postcolonialism, finding a common ground for them in the poetry of Darwish in the common sense of using nature to resist colonizers of his homeland. The adapted concepts used for the purpose of the analysis of the six selected poems of Darwish are interconnectedness, forms of nature and internal resistance and external resistance.

3.1 Interconnectedness

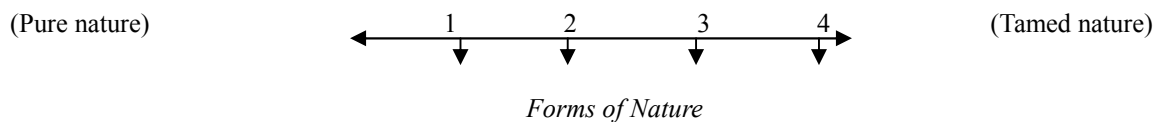
The concept of interconnectedness in the current framework is based on the premise that our identity is tied to the land: "We do not know who we are unless we know where we are". Accordingly, the concept of identity in Darwish's poems is linked to the idea of land, which is central to ecocriticism. Hamoud et al (2012) asserts that interconnectedness is among the most basic of ecocriticism tenets as ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between humans and nature. Glotfelty (1996) presents a definition of ecocriticism that "takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture". Therefore, this concept involves analyzing the interplay between humans and their environment and the relationships that exist between them in the literary texts. In this vein, the concept of interconnectedness will be used to analyze the suggestive inseparability Darwish could have made between identity and land in his poems and how he utilizes them to show resistance.

3.2 Forms of Nature

In the postcolonial studies, nature is viewed as marginal. This is because the focus is on the interaction between humans - the colonized and colonizers. This marginality in approaching nature has been replaced by the coming of the newly ecocritical approach which bridges nature and culture, putting nature at the center of analysis in any literary endeavor. Kalejahi (2012) argues that:

The metaphoric fields around Rose and kudzu demonstrate that Ozeki's approach to nature as a dish prevents her text from a nostalgic idealization of nature as the location of purity vis-à-vis the contaminated space of culture.

Likewise, Darwish utilizes nature and its various forms in his poems of resistance to further his activist agenda. Accordingly, the concept of "forms of nature" is adapted to indicate the natural areas /the elements of nature that range from pure nature to nature that has been cultivated.



The continuum above shows that nature changes in form on the spectrum. It reveals the elements of nature from pure nature to nature that is cultivated by humans. On one level, it ranges between nature and culture, and between human identity and land represented by nature at the second level. At the third level, it is between postcolonialism and ecocriticism (from marginal to central). However, the distinction between the two remains stable. That is, the existence of distinctions is not weakened at all by the simultaneous existence of intermediate positioning proposed in this study. Consider, for instance, what it can be called the 'outdoor environment' as a series of adjoining and overlapping areas that move gradually from nature to culture, along the following lines:

- Area 1: virgin nature (e.g. deserts, oceans, uninhabited continents).
- Area 2: 'the scenic sublime' (e.g. forests, lakes, mountains, cliffs, waterfalls).
- Area 3: 'the countryside' (e.g. hills, fields, woods).
- Area 4: 'the domestic picturesque' (e.g. parks, gardens, lanes), (Barry, 2002)

In this context, the concept "forms of nature" will be used to show how Darwish makes use of these forms of nature as a partner of the Palestinian identity in forming an interconnected kind of resistance to colonizers of his homeland. In other words, this concept has been adapted to show how Darwish utilizes both pure and tamed or cultivated forms of nature to represent Palestinian land connected to Palestinian identity as a way of resistance in his poems.



### 3.3 Internal Resistance and External Resistance

Resistance is the vital means through which Darwish exposes the connection between Palestinians and their homeland in his poems. He utilizes nature as a powerful form of resistance, which can be coined as ecoresistance, to the colonization of his homeland (Hamoud et al, 2012:82) where the spirit of resistance consecrates all that it shines upon on human and nature and accordingly reveals a strong sense of man's connection to land. To Darwish, the natural world with its many shapes and forms changes but the spirit of connection behind it continues internally and externally until Palestine obtains its independence. The selected poems of Darwish lead us to conceive the mainstream of the connection both internal resistance and external resistance and how they form a bond that connects both people and nature to resist. Furthermore, the spirit of resistance unites the whole Palestine, human and non-human for the sake of getting rid of the land's illegal occupier. In the following lines, we will try to reveal Darwish's notions of internal resistance and external resistance that implicitly convey the connection between Palestinians and their land as can be traced in the selected poems for this paper.

## 4. The Analysis

### 4.1 Interconnectedness of identity and land

Darwish's poems of resistance are typified by the accuracy of the unique connection of Palestinian identity to the land. This kind of connection transcends into a degree of interconnectedness in the inward eyes of Darwish. Hence, there is hardly a sight or a sound, from a stone to a mountain and from the song of a nightingale to the shooting sounds of a gun that is not reflected in some integrated images to evoke a sense of interconnectedness. His poem "Identity Card" illustrates that the Palestinian identity and land are merged as one as can be traced in the following:

My father is from the family of the plough  
Not from a noble line &  
My grandfather was a peasant  
Without nobility genealogy  
My house is a crop-warden's shack

These words of Darwish show his family's humble beginnings, yet he is proud to be associated with the land. The expressions such as "the family of the plough", "the peasant" appear to be a sign of the symbiotic relationship between the poet and the land to which he is rooted. The poet here tends to use the word such "plough, peasant, a crop-warden's shack", which are associated with the Arab environment of farming and land, to evoke the sense of the association of Palestinians with their occupied land. In the following lines, he claims that kind of rootedness in his homeland when he says:

My roots  
Gripped down before time began  
Before the blossoming of ages  
Before cypress trees & olive trees  
Before grass sprouted

Darwish points to the time before even the trees and grass have germinated. Indeed, these hyperbolic metaphors reflect the spontaneous and intensive overflow of such a powerful sense of inseparability between Palestinians and their occupied land. The use of the expression "my roots gripped down" is borrowed from the world of plants to human world to evoke the sense of rootedness between the poet and his homeland.

The buds of interconnectedness between identity and land are brought to light in the poem "the Passport" when he says:

Do not ask the trees about their names  
Do not ask the valleys about their mother  
The sword of light cleaves from my forehead  
From my hand gushes the river's water  
All the heart of people



Are my nationality

So take away my passport.

These lines show that the trees and valleys know their own origin, just as the speaker himself is firm of his own identity and land. The images of “the sword of light cleaves from my forehead” and “from my hands gushes the river’s water” implicitly evoke the sense of interconnected resistance when he uses light and forehead and hands and river’s water” which indicate that he has become the primary vein of both land and people. Indeed, it seems that Darwish overtly and covertly wants to emphasize, on the one hand, that they colonizers could occupy his land, but they cannot erase his identity that is firmly interconnected with the occupied land. On the other hand, he aims at evoking a sense of interconnectedness between Palestinians and their occupied land. Furthermore, as a true representative of Palestinian identity and land, Darwish is endowed with an expansive sense of resistance that enables him to create a world of interconnectedness between people and land. He sows the seeds of the elements of nature and human identity to bud as interconnectedness that is the embodiment of both Palestinian land as represented by “the trees”, “the valleys”, “light” and “the river’s water” and the Palestinian identity symbolized by “all the hearts of people”. Indeed, the elements of Palestinian identity and the aspects of the occupied land are delicately merged in his poetry and it is difficult to say which of the two predominates.

In the poem “To My Mother”, his ardent zeal for closeness with his homeland, whose image has not changed over the years, is expressed in the opening lines of this poem when he says:

I long for my mother’s bread  
My mother’s coffee  
My mother’s touch

By referring to Palestine as his mother in these lines, Darwish shows that he can never be severed from the umbilical cord that links him to his land. He will always be the son of the land; he will forever bask in and yearn for his mother’s love. Darwish deliberately refers to “his mother’s bread, coffee and touch” because Arabs have their special ways in making bread and coffee that cannot be served elsewhere in the same manner and taste as the ones he used to have in his homeland. He observes that the ways and manners of life have been changed on the occupied land. Yet, he really feels that the original stamp of Palestinian land, which is symbolized by “my mother’s touch”, will remain etched in the recesses of his consciousness.

In several lines in the body of the poem, his commanding use of similes expresses his willingness to sacrifice for his land:

If one day I return,  
take me as a veil to your eyelashes  
Clothe my bones with grass

The image “take me as a veil to your eyelashes” is depicted from the Arab Muslim culture in which the women cover their faces as a commitment to make them unknown to foreigners. The use of the veil, on the one hand, evokes the sense of Darwish’s closeness to his homeland and his willingness to protect his land. On the other hand, it evokes the sense of hidden feelings that Palestinians have towards their land. Then, he turns to nature and calls for a dress made out of grass to cover his bones. Indeed, the two images merge human and natural aspects reveal a clear picture of the interconnected resistance.

Use me as wood to feed your fire  
as the clothesline on the roof of your house.

The images here show the simplicity of the Palestinian way of life as they are still using wood for making fire and clothesline on the roofs of the houses. Conversely, however, these images evoke the poet’s readiness to sacrifice himself for the sake of his homeland’s independence for the occupation imposed on them.

In the poem, “To My Father” Darwish depicts another image of interconnected resistance when he says:

He lowered his eyes from the moon  
And bent low to take a handful of the soil  
And prayed.



Darwish describes his father's emotional state before and after the occupation. Before occupying his land, his father used to look peacefully at the moon and enjoy his life on his land. Once his land is occupied, his cheerfulness fades. The image of bending and taking a handful of the soil and praying evokes the sense of oppression hovering over his existence and how he is forced to leave his land. The image also reveals the depth of his attachment to his land.

Similarly, Darwish's sense of interconnectedness takes a step further to flower in the poem "A Lover from Palestine", in which interconnectedness between Palestinians and nature is a predominant element. The title suggests a lover who loves his beloved "Palestine" which was occupied by the Israeli forces in 1948. This love indicates that the poet and his homeland, which he symbolically addresses as his beloved, are inseparable. This poem exemplifies interconnected resistance by focusing on the aspects of nature and the organs of humans in co-existence and is interdependent:

Your eyes are a thorn in my heart  
Hurting me but I worship it  
And shelter it from the wind  
Stab with it past night and pains.  
Your words were my song  
I saw you last at the port  
I saw your face in the walls.  
And you are the words of my lips  
You are the fire and the water.

**Palestinian in life and Palestinian in death**

In the lines above, Darwish transforms the occupied land of Palestine into the pure beloved whose images constitute the poet's sense of attachment. The various natural features of Palestine - its flowers, birds, animals, water, winds, storms, and trees amongst so many others - are closely linked with human organs to evoke interdependence. In these images, depicted from the Palestinian environment, nature is associated with man in his resistance. Accordingly, the poet addresses it directly using the pronouns "you" and "your". He connects the Palestinian cities and villages that are symbolized by "your eyes" to the poet's heart. This organic bond between his heart and his homeland's eyes evoke the depth of the poet's association to the land that causes him painful because of the destruction and occupation of the Israeli forces. This continuous agony is revealed by the image of "a thorn in my heart". Moreover, it is related to his tongue, to his eyes and to his lips. Furthermore, the images of Palestine as "the fire and water", "Palestinian in life and Palestinian in death" evoke the sense of interconnected resistance when he depicts his activism as the source of love, warmth, and life and the source of grief and death simultaneously. Undeniably, these images and symbols drawn from the poet's environment evoke the anguish of the Arab people against colonization of their homeland. The image "you are the fire and water" indicates the centralism of the poet's nature that it is not merely the center of beautiful scenes but the center of resistance to the Israeli colonizers.

The common sense of Darwish's mutual dependence of identity and land is shown further in Darwish's poem "A Lover from Palestine" as can be traced in the following lines:

Embrace me to your eyes  
Embrace me to you wherever you are  
Embrace me to you however, you are  
Bring back to me the colors of face and body  
Hearts of light and eyes' light  
Salt of bread and melody  
Taste of soil and homeland.

These lines seem to cater expressly to the sense of connection in its final moments of budding when the speaker feels that he is in a real need to be embraced by the land under any condition. He claims that the loss of land has resulted in the loss of his vitality of his senses and his insight. The loss of his senses is revealed in the sequences



of his images that evoke the sense of sight and touch, hear and taste. Importantly, Darwish seems to have the sixth sense that is referred to as “taste of soil and homeland” which exposes the poet’s interconnectedness with his homeland. Thus, the poem redeploys the sense of co-dependence in many interesting ways and images.

#### 4.2 Forms of Nature

As mentioned earlier, the concept “Forms of nature” is adapted in this study to show how Darwish makes use of the various forms of nature and employ them to make overt man’s connection to his homeland. We contend that Darwish utilizes nature in terms of the four areas that range from pure nature to nature that has been cultivated by humans to expose the connection of Palestinians to their lost land.

##### 4.2.1. Forms of Pure Nature

The connection between Palestinians and their land can be traced in Darwish’s poem, “The Perseverance” in which he says:

We will not be separated  
The seas and the deserts are in front of us  
The forests are behind us  
Oh, my friend, take me  
How can we be separated?

In the above lines, the poet bestows the forms of nature that are uncultivated, namely, the seas, the deserts and the forests and employs them to convey the connection between the Palestinian identity and land in the most forceful manner. Darwish uses the metaphor of “seas” to reveal the vastness of Palestinian connection to their land. In the image of “the Seas” and “deserts”, and forests, we can see the transcendence of the sea, the desert and the forest into a majestically, sacred force of resistance. They are not human-ruled assets for our exploitation, leisure or travel but they are the powers that show our minute nature against its sublime nature. From this sublime nature, they become a source of rest and restoration for Palestinian unity of land and identity. 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 when necessary.

##### 4.2.2 The Scenic Forms of nature

In the poem “A Lover from Palestine”, the blooming of Darwish’s sense of connection between him and his land comes out through a number of images and symbols of nature that fall under the scenic forms of nature that have been utilized as a form of resistance. This kind of connection is implicitly evoked out of resistance to the colonizers of his homeland as can be seen in the following lines:

Heedless of the hewer's blows  
beyond the claw and the fangs of the jungle beasts

These images indicate resistance to the colonizers in the sense that the colonizers are unmindful of the hewer’s blows, which will attack them. The hewer and the beasts of the jungle with its image of “the claw and the fangs” symbolize the threat of the resistance to the occupier of the land as depicted by the poet in the form of fauna.

“Like the sparrow that left our doors after you”

This “sparrow”, which is a small bird in Palestine, leaves its place for some time and comes back, symbolizes, on the one hand, resistance of the exiled people of Palestine who are forced to leave their home land but they will come back, like the sparrow, to their homeland. On the other hand, it is a symbol of man’s connection to his land.

Similarly, Darwish uses the image of the sparrow as a form of resistance and at the same time a symbol of Palestinians-land connection as can be traced in the poem “the Passport” when he says:

All the sparrows that chased  
My palm at the door of the distant airport





The collective image of the sparrow as seen in these two poems highlights the fact that smallness does not equate lack of strength. In the sparrow's dexterity to fly back and forth, Darwish is also giving ominous warning to the occupiers that Palestinian people will return to claim the land.

The connection through resistance takes another scenic form of Palestinian nature when Darwish uses flora as a form of resistance as can be seen in following line of the poem "A Lover from Palestine" when he says:

"And you like the braided palm tree unbending to the storm"

In this line, the image of the unbending "palm tree" symbolizes the strength of resistance to the colonizer who is symbolized by "the storm". The "palm tree" is also used to evoke the connection of man and land in the sense that the palm tree is very close to people in the Arab culture as it provides them with dates which are inseparable from Arab identity.

Similarly, in the following lines of the same poem, Darwish declares:

I saw you in the stalls, in the streets  
Warming yourself by the fire  
In blood dripping from the sun  
In the salt of the sea and the sand  
You are the fire  
And the water.

These images suggest the feelings that bind Palestinians to their land that is revealed by the poet's suffering from the barrenness of his homeland due to the destructive and oppressive colonizers. This kind of link is performed through "the dripping blood from the sun" and "the salt of the sea and the sand" and "the fire". Another image that demonstrates the scenic forms of nature are used as a form of resistance can be seen in the following lines:

You are my virgin garden as  
Faithful as the wheat

The images of "virgin garden" and "as faithful as the wheat" convey the faithfulness of the Palestinian nature in remaining as a virgin garden in the sense that it does not accept the presence of the colonizer on it as it is closely related to its people. Nature even supports the continuing Palestinian resistance by providing people with food to pursue resistance.

#### 4.2.3 Forms of the 'domestic, picturesque and the countryside' Nature

Among the forms of nature used by Darwish as vital ways of resistance that evoke the sense of connection between identity and land is resistance through the form of the countryside nature. This is because Darwish was a countryside child who was born in the Palestinian village, Al-Birwa. The countryside nature of his village in which he grew up is reflected in his poems and through which he conveys his sense of rootedness as can be seen clearly in the following lines of the poem "A Lover from Palestine":

I saw you on thorny hills  
a sheep less shepherd-chased  
I saw you on the ruins  
you were a green orchard  
  
I stood a stranger  
knocking at your door  
  
The doors, the windows, the cemented stone  
Vibrated

The images depicted by the poet in these lines such as "thorny hills", a sleepless shepherd", and "the ruins" emphasize the barrenness of the land that was previously a "green orchard". This aridity of land is due to the effects of the colonizer on the land. However, the vibrating "doors, the windows and the cemented stones", represent the sense of the resistance. Here, "vibration" signifies the sense of resistance evoked within the poet by his surroundings which itself seems to presage and support the armed struggle. The "vibrating objects" depicted show that nature foreshadows the resistance that would rock the Arab world when the colonized people rise, united in their outrage against the colonizers. Similarly, he turns to use the image of "stones" to express his father's association with the nature when he remarks in his poem "To My Father":



The lighting lit the valleys  
My Father has been in them  
Nurturing the stones  
Since a long time, he implanted trees  
His loving skin slowly scatters dew  
His hand makes the stones sprout leaves.

These lines present a sequence of images used by Darwish to evoke a strong sense of connection through the forms of nature. The “stones” symbolize the Palestinian young boys, Darwish being one of them, for them his father, who represents the Palestinian fathers, and how the trees they plant will become the fatal means by which Palestinians use to resist the colonizers. The image of “the stones sprout leaves” implicitly conveys that the Palestinian resistance symbolized by the stones will lead to the freedom and independence of the occupied land of Palestine.

All the wheat fields  
All the prisons  
All the white graves  
All the frontiers  
All the eyes  
Were with me

They had left them out of the passport.

The use of these aspects of Palestinian nature reveals that the poet’s land and identity are stable and connected to each other and all the efforts of the colonizers to separate them will be in vain. He implicitly resists the Israeli passport given to Palestinians by asserting that they can drop him out the Palestinian passport and replace it with their own, but they certainly cannot take away his Palestinian identity and land that are inseparable within him .

As a true voice of Palestinian resistance through the forms of nature, Darwish succeeds in employing the various forms of nature to convey his resistance as can be proved in the following lines when he declares:

Do not ask the trees about their names  
Do not ask the valleys about their mother  
The sword of light cleaves from my forehead  
From my hand gushes the river’s water  
All the hearts of the people  
Are my nationality  
So take away my passport

In these lines, Darwish makes it clear that the trees, the valleys, the light and the river’s water know their origin, just as the speaker himself is firm of his own identity and the belonging of the occupied land to him. Accordingly, the colonizers have to leave Palestine. The expression “take away my passport” implicitly means that the colonizers should take the passport given to the poet in his homeland and go away.

In the poem “The Passport”, the poet links explicitly forms of Palestinian nature to his identity. He is content to describe their recognition of his identity rather than anyone else when he says:

Do not leave the palm of my hand without a sun  
Because trees recognize me  
All the songs of rain recognize me.

Even when he has to leave his land, it will always remember him as the son of the soil. The fact that the trees and rain acknowledge his existence is far more meaningful than the piece of bureaucratic paper that is man-made and given under coercion. The trees and rain do not need to be coerced to know that the speaker is one of them, and



that he is closely identified with the land of his birth.

#### *4.3 Internal Resistance and External Resistance*

The opening lines of the poem “On Perseverance” expose a clear depiction of Darwish’s sense of external resistance through the form of Palestinian nature that reveals his connection to his homeland when he declares:

If the olive trees remembered their implanters  
Their oil would be tears!

The poet uses the “olive tree” to symbolize the Palestinian resistance that evokes the connection between the Palestinian identity and land because the olive tree is a famous Palestinian tree and it is known for being very hardy and fire-resistant. Its roots are very robust and capable of regenerating the tree when the above ground structure is spoiled or destroyed. More importantly, it is well known in the Arab world as it is mentioned seven times in the Quran. It is a tree chosen by God to show its values for human health.

In the poem “Identity Card”, the external aspect of Palestinian nature is inextricable from Darwish, and he considers it as an inexhaustible source of Palestinian unity with land and the central store of their weapons of resistance asserting his belonging to it when he says:

My father is from the family of plough  
And not from a noble line

After confirming his intimacy to it, he depicts the harshness of his resistance represented by his hands that have been made hard by the continuing attachment with the Palestinian rocks:

My palm is solid as rock  
Scratching whoever touches it

In the following lines, he carries out revealing how unity and connection of people and land in his occupied village though the Israeli forces of occupation have destroyed it:

I come from a remote forgotten village  
Its streets are nameless  
All its men in the fields and the quarry

The lines above reveal the external kind of resistance as all people seen in the fields and quarry. However, he leaps from that visual form of resistance to invisible resistance within himself when he declares:

Write down on the top of the first page  
I do not hate people  
I steal from no- one  
However,  
If I am hungry  
I will eat the flesh of my usurper

Be aware be aware of my hunger and of my anger.

These lines are so expressive of Darwish’s internal and external resistance. The shape of wings that the poem suggests symbolizes eventual flight of freedom. He symbolically reveals these two forms of his resistance simultaneously by the expression: “my hunger and anger.” That is, “hunger” symbolizes Darwish’s external resistance due to the destruction of the land that is the source of food to Palestinians. Similarly, “anger” symbolizes his internal resistance evoked as he bears witness to the suffering of Palestinian caused by the occupation. Indeed, he artistically could shape the image of ecoresistance internally and externally, switching his attention to the external resistance when he asserts, “I will eat the flesh of my usurper”, raising a warning to the occupier of his homeland that his undercurrent resistance will erupt one day and will end the presence of the occupier on their land.

In the poem “The Passport”, Darwish is inclined to depict a realistic picture of the contemporary Palestinian life, which is dominated by having a passport in their homeland, with a conscious purpose of evoking resistance internally and externally. In the context of the internal resistance, he uses the images of Palestinian unrest and suffering inside their land when he says:



They did not see me in the shadow which  
Suck out my colour in a passport  
In their view, my wound was an exhibit  
To a tourist who adores collecting pictures  
They did not recognize me.

The poet evokes a kind of suffering as he is being ill-treated and even unrecognized, even though the forms of his land such as the trees, the rain, the sun and the moon have recognized him. He asserts that kind of oppression under the occupation when he cries:

Stripped of name and identity  
In land which I nurtured with my own hand

It is hardly acceptable that he remains unknown among the land he has cultivated by his hands, and accordingly the internal resistance finds its way to rise when he says:

Today Ayoub shouted and filled the sky  
Do not make a moral of me twice

Here, Darwish symbolically reveals the Palestinian struggle that leads to an outburst of resistance using the symbolic expression “today Ayoub shouted and filled the sky”. The poem ends with his overall cry of human resistance:

“So, take away my passport”

This reveals a strong sense of resistance when he is addressing the occupiers of his homeland regarding the way in which they treat Palestinians on their homeland. In the context of the external resistance, the forms of nature are present in the poet’s vision and they serve as the best exposition of the spirit of the Palestinians’ connection with their land. His images are taken from the familiar areas of common Palestinian experience, for example “trees recognize me”, “the songs of the rain recognize me”, “do not leave me like the moon”. He keeps on advocating the supporting stance of nature in Palestinian suffering as well as resistance through his intense images. Furthermore, forms of Palestinian nature assume to accompany him in the best of manner such as “All the sparrows which chased my palm at the door of the distant airport”, “all the wheat fields”, “and all the frontiers”, “all the white graves”. These images reveal the constant unity of Palestinians and their land to free themselves from the inhuman restrictions of the Israeli colonizers of their country.

Among the buds of Darwish’s sense of Palestinians’ connection with the land that is revealed through the eco-resistance in its internal and external forms is the one depicted in the poem written to the poet’s land that is symbolized by “mother” when he addresses his mother:

If I return put me  
As a fuel in your oven

This image reveals, largely, the poet’s attitude towards the occupation of his homeland to which he is closely connected and which has turned into an oven due to the continuing fighting and the endless firing of the colonizers against Palestinians in their land. Moreover, Darwish’s attachment to his homeland has fostered the spirit of resistance within him to a degree that he can serve as a fuel of Palestinian resistance. The word “fuel”, on the one hand, evokes symbolically the internal resistance in the sense that it is a symbol of Darwish’s poetry of resistance that intensifies Palestinians’ outburst and feeds them with emotional power to resist. On the other hand, it reveals his external resistance in the sense that even the land has been destructed by nothing is there but firing. Accordingly, Darwish lives intensely, feels intensely, sees intensely, resists intensely and intensely relates Palestinians to their homeland.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to approach identity and land in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish from an ecopostcolonial perspective by analyzing some selected poems that focused on the quest for identity and loss of land in the occupied Palestine and how they are closely interconnected in Darwish’s poems of resistance. We have found that the Palestinian identity is closely linked to the occupied land that is central to the field of



postcolonial ecocriticism we adapted as a new analytical lens for reading resistance poetry of Darwish. As it has been made overt, the selected poems of Darwish are populated with a continuous and unique declaration for twinning loss of identity and land in the occupied Palestine and the twinning connection of them in Darwish's poems at the same time. In addition, Darwish definitely contributes to the construction of Palestinian identity and stirs up a sense of internal resistance and external resistance towards the colonizer of the land. The implication of this paper is that the proposed ecopostcolonial approach can be used as a useful analytical lens for reading the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish. Furthermore, his poems can be used further as a poetic discipline through which we can implant a new awareness of man's connection to land. Undeniably, the ecopostcolonial lens used here opens up new landscapes of reading Mahmoud Darwish's use of nature, extending what we know of his connection between land and identity that is an important component of his poetry of resistance.

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