

MAHMUD DARWISH AND ARAB NATIONAL LITERATURE

Kamoliddinova M.N.

2nd-year student, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies

Institute of Languages and Literature of Eastern Peoples

+998881421806

manoka5015@gmail.com

Shomurzayev Mukhammad

Supervisor Teacher:

Abstract: *Mahmud Darwish is considered one of the most prominent poets in modern Arab literature, whose works have played a crucial role in shaping Arab national identity. This article explores Darwish's contribution to Arab national literature, analyzing his use of poetic language to articulate themes of exile, homeland, resistance, and identity. As a central figure in Palestinian literature, Darwish's work reflects the broader struggles of the Arab world, intertwining personal experiences with collective national consciousness. By examining Darwish's key works and their impact on Arab culture, the article highlights how his poetry has transcended national boundaries, becoming emblematic of the Arab experience as a whole.*

Keywords: *Mahmud Darwish, Arab National Literature, Palestinian poetry, exile, identity, resistance, nationalism, modern Arab literature*

Mahmud Darwish is often regarded as the voice of the Palestinian people, but his influence extends far beyond the borders of Palestine. His poetry speaks to the broader Arab world, resonating with themes of loss, exile, and the longing for a homeland. Born in 1941 in the village of Al-Birwa in Palestine, Darwish witnessed the displacement of his people firsthand when his family fled the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. This early experience of exile and loss would come to shape his poetic voice, as he dedicated his life to expressing the pain and hope of his people through his writing.

Darwish's poetry is known for its lyrical beauty and its deep political engagement. His work weaves together personal reflection and collective memory, creating a space where the individual and the nation converge. For Darwish, poetry was not merely a form of artistic expression but a means of resistance and a vehicle for preserving national identity. His poems, which range from intimate love songs to epic meditations on history and politics, have made him a symbol of resilience and defiance in the face of occupation and oppression.

In this article, we will explore the ways in which Darwish's poetry reflects and contributes to Arab national literature. We will examine the themes of exile, identity, and resistance that are central to his work, and consider how these themes resonate with the broader Arab experience. We will also look at how Darwish's poetry has been received and celebrated within the Arab world and beyond, and how his legacy continues to influence modern Arab writers and intellectuals.

Mahmud Darwish's upbringing played a crucial role in the development of his poetry. The forced displacement of his family during the Nakba (the Palestinian exodus of 1948) deeply affected him, instilling a sense of loss and longing for a homeland that would become a central theme in his work. After fleeing to Lebanon, his family eventually returned to Palestine, settling in the village of Deir al-Asad. However, Darwish grew up as an internal refugee in a country that was now part of the State of Israel. This experience of living as a second-class citizen in his own homeland instilled in him a profound sense of injustice and shaped his view of the world.

His early works, such as "Asafir bila ajniha" (Birds Without Wings) and "Awraq al-zaytun" (Leaves of Olives), reflect his deep connection to the land of Palestine and his desire to express the suffering of his people. Written in the 1960s, these collections capture the nascent stage of Darwish's poetic journey, blending personal experiences with collective struggles. His use of nature imagery—olive trees, birds, and rivers—served as symbols of the Palestinian landscape, embodying both the beauty and pain of a people in exile.

Darwish's decision to write in Arabic was not only a reflection of his identity as an Arab but also a deliberate choice to resist cultural erasure. At a time when the Palestinian narrative was being marginalized or misrepresented in the international media, Darwish used his poetry to affirm the existence of his people and their right to self-determination. His work became a form of cultural and political resistance, a way to preserve the memory of Palestine and to ensure that the voices of its people were heard.

Exile and the Theme of Displacement in Darwish's Poetry

Exile is perhaps the most pervasive theme in Mahmud Darwish's poetry. As a Palestinian who spent much of his life in exile, Darwish's writing often reflects the anguish and dislocation of being uprooted from one's homeland. However, his treatment of exile is not limited to the physical displacement from land; it extends to a psychological and existential state of being. In his poem "The Earth is Closing on Us," Darwish writes:

"The earth is closing on us, pushing us through the last passage, and we tear off our limbs to pass through."

This imagery of confinement and dismemberment captures the sense of suffocation that exile brings—the loss of identity, community, and connection to one's roots. For Darwish,

exile is a form of death, but it is also a state of perpetual hope and yearning for return. His poetry constantly oscillates between despair and defiance, as he grapples with the reality of dispossession while refusing to surrender to it.

In “Identity Card,” one of his most famous poems, Darwish directly addresses the indignities of life as an Arab under Israeli rule. The speaker of the poem declares:

“Write down! I am an Arab, robbed of my ancestors’ vineyards, forced to work as a servant for others.

This declaration of identity in the face of oppression is a powerful assertion of pride and defiance. It reflects Darwish’s belief in the importance of maintaining one’s dignity and identity, even in the face of overwhelming adversity. The poem became an anthem for Palestinians and Arabs across the region, symbolizing the collective resistance to displacement and occupation.

The Evolution of Darwish’s Nationalism: From Resistance to Reflection. In the early stages of his career, Mahmud Darwish’s poetry was overtly political, marked by a fervent nationalism and a call to arms against the Israeli occupation. His work from the 1960s and 1970s is characterized by a sense of urgency and a commitment to the Palestinian cause. However, as he matured as a poet, Darwish’s nationalism became more nuanced and reflective. He began to explore the complexities of identity, the futility of violence, and the human cost of war.

One of the turning points in Darwish’s poetic journey was the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, where he was living in exile at the time. The brutality of the conflict, particularly the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, had a profound impact on him. In response, Darwish wrote “Memory for Forgetfulness,” a prose-poem that reflects on the horrors of war and the emotional toll of living in exile. The poem is less a rallying cry for resistance than a meditation on the absurdity of violence and the need for reconciliation.

As Darwish’s poetry evolved, it reflected a shift from a singular focus on Palestinian resistance to broader reflections on the nature of homeland, identity, and humanity. This maturation of his literary voice is evident in his later works, where he began to grapple with more philosophical questions surrounding exile and existence. In these later stages of his career, Darwish did not abandon the cause of Palestinian nationalism, but rather complicated it by exploring the internal contradictions and personal struggles that come with it.

In his collection *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?*, Darwish reflects on his childhood and the loss of his homeland through deeply personal and introspective verses. The poem of the same name is an extended metaphor for loss and abandonment, in which the horse represents both the land of Palestine and the poet’s father, who passed away in

exile. In this work, Darwish’s nationalism is intertwined with grief and memory, revealing the emotional weight of the Palestinian experience.

At the same time, Darwish began to question the limitations of nationalism, especially when it became dogmatic or exclusionary. In one of his most famous poems, “A State of Siege,” written during the Second Intifada, he writes:

“We do what prisoners do, what the unemployed do: We are planting a forest of stubborn trees and waiting.”

This poem captures the sense of despair and futility that often accompanies prolonged conflict. Darwish does not glorify violence or resistance for its own sake; instead, he presents it as a necessary but tragic aspect of the Palestinian struggle for survival. In this way, Darwish’s later poetry reflects a more complex and critical view of nationalism, one that recognizes both its necessity and its limitations.

Darwish’s Poetic Legacy in Arab National Literature. Mahmud Darwish’s contribution to Arab national literature cannot be overstated. He stands as a towering figure in the world of modern Arabic poetry, not only for his mastery of language but for his ability to give voice to the collective experiences of Arab people. His poetry has transcended national and linguistic boundaries, finding resonance across the Arab world and beyond.

One of Darwish’s greatest achievements was his ability to universalize the Palestinian experience. While his poetry is rooted in the specific context of the Israeli occupation, it speaks to broader themes of displacement, identity, and resistance that are shared by many people across the globe. In this way, Darwish’s work bridges the gap between the personal and the political, the national and the universal. His poetry invites readers to empathize with the struggles of the Palestinian people, while also reflecting on their own experiences of loss, exile, and belonging.

Darwish’s influence can be seen in the work of many contemporary Arab writers and poets, who have been inspired by his ability to weave together personal narrative and political critique. His legacy is also evident in the growing recognition of Palestinian literature as an essential part of the Arab literary canon. Through his work, Darwish helped to elevate the voices of Palestinian writers and intellectuals, ensuring that their stories and experiences would not be erased from history.

The Role of Language in Darwish’s Poetry: A Tool for Resistance and Survival. For Mahmud Darwish, language was not just a medium for artistic expression—it was a tool for survival. As a Palestinian living under occupation, Darwish understood that language could be used to resist erasure and to assert identity in the face of oppression. In his poetry, he often employs language as a means of reclaiming lost spaces and memories. His use of

Arabic, in particular, is a deliberate act of resistance against colonial attempts to marginalize or erase Palestinian culture.

One of the most striking aspects of Darwish’s poetry is his use of metaphors, imagery, and symbolism to convey complex emotions and ideas. The olive tree, for example, is a recurring symbol in his work, representing the resilience of the Palestinian people and their deep connection to the land. Similarly, his frequent references to birds and rivers evoke feelings of freedom and longing, as well as the transient nature of exile.

In many ways, Darwish’s poetry can be seen as a form of linguistic resistance. By writing in Arabic and using the language of his ancestors, he was able to preserve the cultural memory of his people and to challenge the narrative of occupation. His poetry serves as a reminder that language can be a powerful tool for both political resistance and personal survival.

Darwish’s contribution to Arab national literature must also be understood within the broader context of the Arab intellectual tradition. Throughout his career, Darwish was engaged in a dialogue with the political and philosophical movements that shaped the Arab world in the 20th century. From the rise of Arab nationalism to the impact of Marxism and post-colonialism, Darwish’s work reflects his deep engagement with the intellectual currents of his time.

One of the key figures with whom Darwish is often compared is the Egyptian poet and philosopher Ahmed Shawqi, known as the “Prince of Poets” for his role in shaping modern Arab literature. Like Shawqi, Darwish used his poetry to address both personal and national concerns, blending lyricism with political critique. However, while Shawqi focused more on the grandeur of Arab history and culture, Darwish’s poetry is grounded in the lived experiences of ordinary people—especially those who have been displaced or marginalized.

Darwish was also influenced by the broader currents of post-colonial thought, which emphasized the importance of resisting cultural domination and asserting national identity in the face of imperialism. His poetry reflects many of the concerns that animated post-colonial intellectuals, including the struggle for self-determination, the critique of Western imperialism, and the search for a new cultural identity in the aftermath of colonization.

Mahmud Darwish remains a monumental figure in Arab national literature, whose work has shaped not only the Palestinian literary tradition but the entire corpus of modern Arab poetry. His ability to capture the personal and collective dimensions of exile, resistance, and identity has made him a symbol of the Palestinian struggle and a voice for all those who have experienced displacement and loss.

Through his poetic legacy, Darwish continues to inspire new generations of writers, thinkers, and activists, who look to his work for guidance in navigating the complexities of

identity and resistance in a globalized world. His poetry, filled with lyricism, philosophical depth, and political consciousness, stands as a testament to the power of language as a tool for both artistic expression and political resistance.

As long as the themes of exile, longing, and resistance remain relevant, Mahmud Darwish’s work will continue to resonate with readers and serve as a vital part of Arab national literature. His poetry is not merely a reflection of the Palestinian struggle, but a universal meditation on the human condition, one that will endure for generations to come.

REFERENCES :

1. Darwish, M. (2003). “Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems”. University of California Press.
2. Joudah, F. (2014). “Mahmoud Darwish: The Poet's Art and His Nation”. Syracuse University Press.
3. Harlow, B., & Zafar, K. (2012). “The Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish: A Postcolonial Text”. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 32, 241-255.
4. Mattawa, K. (2014). “Mahmoud Darwish: The Poet of the Present”. *The New York Review of Books*. Retrieved from <https://www.nybooks.com>
5. Al-Jayyusi, S. K. (1977). “Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry”. Brill Publishers.
6. Sa’di, A., & Abu-Lughod, L. (Eds.). (2007). “Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory”. Columbia University Press.
7. Allen, R. (1995). “Modern Arabic Literature”. Cambridge University Press.
8. Radwan, N. (2012). “Mahmoud Darwish and the Power of the Word”. Routledge.
9. Saloul, I. (2014). “Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination: Telling Memories”. Palgrave Macmillan.
10. Nassar, H. (2010). “Exile, Identity, and Artistic Creation in Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry”. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 41(1), 73-95.
11. Qupty, F. (1999). “The Evolution of Palestinian Nationalism in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish”. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 29(1), 66-89.
12. Zangana, H. (2014). “Mahmoud Darwish: Exile's Poet”. *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Retrieved from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg>