

CHAPTER 2

REVIEWS OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Signpost

In this chapter, I provide a review of Darwish's criticism. I first look at the themes discussed, especially resistance to the occupier, exile, mythologies, human values, ecocritical readings and studies of identity. Then, the themes, approaches, and findings of those reviewed studies are analyzed. The readings are subsequently incorporated to the present research to identify and bridge the gap in the literature. The final section of this chapter critically analyzes existing works to position this study in relation to them. This critical analysis reveals gaps in the criticism of Darwish's poetry, thus showing the centrality of my work.

2.2 Reviews of Literature Concerning Poems by Mahmoud Darwish

Criticism of Darwish's poetry ranged from reflections on his life and poetic style, through the ways the poet related to the world around, through particular themes (such as home, mother, father, self, siege, exile), to symbols, images and metaphors. Yet all critical works saw a relationship between his writing and grand national themes of a homeland that is lost in 1948. The appreciation of his poetics has even rung bells at the universal level.

Much research has so far been done on Darwish's texts. Books on his life do exist, so do volumes of poetry analyses— often about the poetic style. Much of what we have, however, is biographies— often focusing on the life of the poet, as well as his political and national views. But there is more to Darwish's work than that. Critical works on the

poet— though not as numerous as his works— have ranged from short analyses of individual poems, to collections of critical essays. Approaches to Darwish's poetry— especially known by its figurative, allegorical language— have particularly focused on symbolism and poetic language.

One of the most important contribution to this body of work is Khaled Mattawa's monograph *Mahmoud Darwish: The Poet's Art and His Nation* (2014), which has given a comprehensive account of Darwish's writing and its contextual landscape. In this seminal work, Mattawa enquires into the poet's career, providing us with a system by which Darwish threw himself into the interplay between poetry as a method of portraying the political landscape and as an aesthetic with some universal themes.

Drawing on Darwish's poetry as well as on critical works, Mattawa offers us a chronicle of Darwish's approaches to poetry, starting from the simple style in earlier works to the lengthy, complex language characteristic of the later works. According to Mattawa, much of Darwish's poetry is allegorical, a method the poet used to convey messages past the colonizer's censorship. In many poems, Mattawa maintains, Darwish came to conceptualize and draw boundaries of a two-facet relationship: one between Palestinians and their homeland, and another between the occupier and the land of Palestine.

In his book, Mattawa (2014) provides a close analysis of the most important poems of Darwish, and a chronology of his poems across four phases. The basic interest of the book is to study the tension, Darwish himself was aware of, between the poet as a "universal" agent and as a voice within a particular political or ideological situation, which Darwish expresses in his poem "To the Reader" written in 1964 (p. 20).

Mattawa (2014) divides Darwish's poetic career into four phases. In the first phase (1964-1971), the poet, Mattawa observes, focused on the occupation of Palestine, and

aimed to foster a collective identity for all the Palestinians, as to "shape an empowered Palestinian subjectivity" (Mattawa, 2014, p. 31), to foster enthusiasm, and to "demythologize the occupier and to communicate with him" (Mattawa, 2014, p. 47). During this phase, Darwish started to focus on national and collective concerns, not the least the obstacles in mobility, economic repression, and the threat of detention which had also severely impacted intimate community relations (Mattawa, 2014, p. 60). This concern is represented in one of Darwish's early collections, *A Lover from Palestine* (1966), which focuses on the recurring motif of the homeland (Mattawa, 2014, p. 60). During this phase, as well, Darwish explored the experiences of his adversaries, the Israelis (Mattawa, 2014, p. 67). For example, in the poem *A Soldier Dreaming of White Lilies*, the poet observes that the Israeli belonging to the land is based on mythical dreams and old books, and not on physical contact with the homeland (Mattawa, 2014, p. 76).

In the second phase (1971-1986), Darwish's poetry became preoccupied with issues related to the Palestinian life in the Diaspora, such as resistance, life conditions, and so forth. During this phase, Darwish started to write resistance poetry, depicting the armed struggle and often composed on the battlefield (Mattawa, 2014, p. 94). The struggle between the autobiographical private self and the public poetic self is also expressed in poems written in this period (Mattawa, 2014, p. 96). Toward the end of this phase, Darwish tried to create a new national mythology in *A Memory for Forgetfulness* (1982), a book of prose that can be seen as a refutation of the Zionists myths regarding claims to the land of Palestine (Mattawa, 2014, p. 107).

In the third phase (1986-1993), Darwish was fully immersed in the battle for Palestine in the cultural arena. Following the Israeli invasion of Beirut, Lebanon, in 1982, the option to fight the invading power became increasingly doubtful among the

Palestinians and the Lebanese (Mattawa, 2014, p. 112). The cultural arena was placed in an international context, as Palestinian intellectuals came to recognize that their writings, including literary texts, should have international reach (Mattawa, 2014, p. 114). In *On This Earth There is What Deserves Life*, Darwish, for the first time, brings into focus issues of life and the desire to live, raising questions of existentialism, a vein the poet grapples with in many of his texts written in that phase (Mattawa, 2014, p. 122). Darwish's creation of a national myth continued in this phase (Mattawa, 2014, p. 130) when he started writing mythical epics, such as *The Hoopoe*. In this epic work, Darwish uses a unified vision of humanity that is born out of a devotion to the earth as a mother figure (Mattawa, 2014, p. 135). For example, in his study "Poetry and Agency in Tagore, Walcott, and Darwish" (Mattawa, 2009).

In the fourth phase (1995-2008), Darwish's poetry takes as its basic premise the idea that the Israeli occupier has nothing to do with the eternal human questions, since such questions do not bear a direct relation to the occupying power (Mattawa, 2014, p. 157). The occupying power, according to Mattawa (2014), always seeks to beleaguer and besiege the Palestinian poets, forcing them to write about one thing—the occupation—so as to kill their creativity and openness to Postnational themes. In *The Mural* (2000), Darwish expresses his poetic endeavor and disconnects himself from fixating on the occupation of the homeland, choosing instead to contemplate questions of collective human concerns (Mattawa, 2014, p. 163).

The existing criticism of Darwish falls, in one way or another, within Mattawa's four stages (the first phase (1964-1971), the poet, Mattawa observes, focused on the occupation of Palestine, and aimed to foster a collective identity for all the Palestinians in Darwish's poetic career, the second phase (1971-1986), Darwish's poetry became preoccupied with issues related to the Palestinian life in the Diaspora such as resistance

, life conditions in diaspora, the third phase (1986-1993), Darwish was fully immersed in the battle for Palestine in the cultural arena , In the fourth phase (1995-2008), Darwish's poetry takes as its basic premise the idea that the Israeli occupier has nothing to do with the eternal human questions) with the focus being on resistance to the occupier; constructing an identity (be it individual, national, Arab or postnational; the exilic experience, demythologizing of the Zionist narrative; and contemplating issues of collective human concerns (the natural environment, moral obligations, etc.).

2.2.1 Poetry of Resistance

In an analysis of Darwish's late phase, Patrick Williams (2012a) finds in Darwish's poems a non-reconciliatory, non-appeasing voice, one that possesses perseverance and courage. This, according to Williams, characterizes Darwish's poetry in the second stage of his poetic career (from the early 1980s to the late 1990s).

The vein of discursive poetics can be heard in many of Darwish's poems. In her essay, Khadija Alaoui (2011) examined the constitutive role of poetry in resistance to colonialism and the violence and brutality of the occupier. She reads Darwish's *The Red Indian's Penultimate Speech to the White Man* and associated poems that concern the repudiation of power, as such power is equivalent to violence and destruction. The poem, she says, embodies the concept of how the powerful (intolerant by their nature, as she observes) establish themselves through uprooting and displacing others. Similarly, Alaoui (2016) explores the construction of power in Darwish's poem, *A State of Siege*. She explains that power in the poem refers to the power of the Palestinians to rise against oppression, not the destructive power of the Israeli occupation.

This impulse of defiance/resilience and power-possession is also captured by many scholars, most of whom focused on symbolism, characteristic of criticism that

specifically looked at Darwish's early poetry. There are several critical accounts on short poems, better known as odes, which Darwish wrote in his early career. Al Fawa'ra (2019) reads two poems (*ID Card* and *Passport*) which Darwish wrote in 1964 (when he was only 22 years old). He finds in the poems some "power" that "transcends oppression and colonization with a warning about consequences and the bravery of the subjugated population" (p. 422). This warning, according to Al Fawa'ra, is about responding to violence (of the occupier) with violence.

Analysis of Darwish's late poetry reveal the way in which Palestinian subjects are oppressed by the Israeli occupier and how they resist the occupier. Patrick Williams (2012b) provides an insight into Palestinian resistance and what it means for, and how it is depicted by, Darwish. According to Williams, Darwish has conceptualized the Palestinian right to resist the occupier, but has also taken resistance beyond rights and duties to a realm of resisting the occupier "through highlighting the human and the humane; and the brutality of war resisted through the gentleness and fragility of human beings and nature" (p. 68). In his inquiry into the tension between Darwish's aesthetics and politics, Williams raises questions about Darwish's poetry, which, Williams maintains, is one of the most significant vehicles that managed to chronicle the experience of a colonized nation against that of the colonizer.

This line of argument was rightly asserted by a lecture delivered by Amira El-Zein in 2009. El-Zein believes that "land and poem are one in Darwish's poetry." Using poetry, Darwish was able to transform "the land into the poem and making Palestine always present and immortal; its history alive, its past preserved and its present transmuted." Quoting Darwish saying "I have learned to dismantle all the words in order to draw from them a single word: home, Palestine," El-Zein reasons that while history is written by the victorious (here the Israeli occupier), Darwish's poetry offers us a

chronicle of history that challenges the narrative of the colonizer— history that tells the true story of an oppressed people. In her analysis of "The Red Indian's Penultimate Speech to the White Man," El-Zein reckons that Darwish has kept the name of Palestine alive in his memory, which also means that he (or his personas and, by extension, all exiled Palestinians) could still return to the land, with memory becoming a construct of rebirth, a form of materializing an identity. The recognition hinted at here cannot, however, be materialized unless the Israeli occupiers liberate their thinking from mythologies.

2.2.1.1 Resistance Through Demythologization of the Israeli Narrative

In an article in which Sinan Antoon (2015) mourned the death of Darwish, he writes that following the Beirut siege in 1982, Darwish's poetry came to touch on different narratives in order to set the Palestinian plight within the broader context of postcolonial tragedies. Since the battle between the Palestinians and the Israeli occupier, as Darwish understood it, is primarily that of a narrative, his later works came to mark a conflict between the Zionist myths and the Palestinian more realistic narrative. According to Antoon (2011), this is a more holistic approach in Darwish's oeuvre – one of a core theme – that of a lost homeland as narrated by the Palestinians themselves.

Reflecting on Darwish's poetry, Antoon says that many of the poems provide a metaphor of devastation and desolation that history has brought to the people of Palestine, a strong statement of ethnic cleansing that the Israeli occupier perpetrated against the indigenous culture. Darwish, according to Antoon, has recollected and reconstructed the voices of the unfortunate, the wretched, the miserable. Quoting from Darwish himself, Antoon (2010) holds that this reconstruction of the narrative in the Palestinian case is comparable to a narrative of a Trojan poet— where Troy fell to the

Greeks, who later wrote history, but were also confronted by the narrative of the defeated (the Trojans).

(Ipek Celik,2008) , in his "Alternative History, Expanding Identity: Myths Reconsidered in Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry" offers us a reading in which Darwish struggle with historical myths. Celik holds that the Israeli occupier uses myths from history to divide the people of Palestine in order to be able to rule and subjugate them. According to Celik, Darwish understood this well and came to the conviction that history "has to be rewritten by the colonized and the oppressed" (Ipek Celik,2008. P. 283) rather than the victorious, the oppressor. Celik surveys mythological elements in Darwish's poems, and finds the poet rejecting the hegemony narrative found in history books (Palestinian children in Israel have to study an Israeli curriculum that is based on the Zionist ideology). Celik holds that Darwish did two things in this regard: deconstructed the dominating mythical narratives and created a complex narrative of a national identity that can hold grounds in the face of the colonizer. This deconstruction was possible through constructing and reconstructing history through poetry.

Both Williams and Celik agree that Darwish came to change his poetic style in the middle of his poetic career in order to "resist against the narrative of the colonizer" (Dhillon 2010). The poet, Khairallah (2011) holds, could delineate a clear boundary between facts/historical reality—which can be found in poetic works and other literature genres—and the mythological/historical/political narrative that misrepresents and distorts that reality and forces the narrative of the conqueror. Using words, Khairallah (2011) remarks, Darwish has forged a narrative that has exposed the colonizer "along with its bulldozers, through a counter-narrative meant to unmask its chauvinism, violence and inhumanity" (Khairallah, 2011, p. 336).

The discussion concerns a battle of narratives waged day and night for more than 73 years now. According to Sazzad (2016), Darwish's narrative is stronger because the "aggressors lack the intrinsic tie to the land, which his people perennially possess. Whereas the Israelis produce mythical claims on the land, the indigenous Palestinians are like their olive trees – unswervingly there" (Sazzad, 2016, p. 359). All of them are there, though the majority live in the Diaspora. Darwish's counter discourse, Sazzad (2016) confirms, is an attempt to defeat "the dehumanization of the Palestinians" (Sazzad, 2016, p. 364), and as such Darwish's narrative enabled him "to imagine the possibility of the seemingly impossible, which in the Palestinian context is the ability to hope to regain the lost homeland" (Sazzad, 2016, p. 364). This idea of what Darwish's poetry was able to do is discussed by Reginald Gibbons (2008), who argues that Darwish's language has advanced a negative theology or what Gibbons (2008) dubs as "apophatic" due to the ability of that language to offer an awareness that is possible only through negating the occupier's narrative.

2.2.2 Identity

Identity as a recurring theme in Darwish's poetry is believed to be at once national and postnational. Some argue that Darwish has only discussed national and Arab identities, but others put Darwish's identity within the larger human experience.

2.2.2.1 National/Arab Identity

Eman Mukattash (2016) divides Darwish's poetic oeuvre temporally into two parts. In the first part– while he was still in Palestine– the physical connection to the land shaped his identity (Eman Mukattash, 2016, p. 18); and in the second part, which began with the poet's departure from Palestine as an exile, he starts an attempt to restore

the lost Arab land and identity (Eman Mukattash, 2016, p. 20). This has given the poet a driving power, a stamina to resist the fixed identity that is forced on him by the occupation of Palestine (Eman Mukattash, 2016, p. 23). By mixing the "textual 'I', the addressed 'you' (and a third absent person (most probably a female))" (Eman Mukattash, 2016, p. 23), Darwish could blur the lines between these two voices and identities— thus suggesting a model that deals with these voices not as binary opposites, but rather as two narrative elements that always move in parallel. At the language level, Darwish's "homeland" catches multiple meanings, giving way for the play of language, suggesting again the play of the identity (Eman Mukattash, 2016, p. 24), which is shaped by language itself (Eman Mukattash, 2016, p. 25).

This quest for identity is captured by Rashad Areqi (2014), who argues that the poet had always searched for a collective identity for himself and his people. Areqi maintains that Darwish was able to find such an identity in the memories of his past (or imagined future) community. Areqi, however, holds that Darwish has always asserted "his Arab identity; he is one of the Arab people and he is very proud of his root as an Arab" (p. 35). Rather than contemplating only the land of Palestine, the poet identifies himself with the larger Arab identity (Areqi, 2014). (This is also a finding Nassar (2006) shares with Areqi in her discussion of identity in Darwish.)

Suad Alenzi (2015) acknowledges this narrow frame of reference. Drawing on a thematic and stylistic approach to discuss the works of Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish in order to identify the formulations of an identity in the post-colonial era, she notes that in Darwish's works one can find a form of marrying between memory, landscape and identity that is constructed on both the space lived— the current state in the occupied Palestine— as well as the space that exists in the memories of the Palestinians in the exile (258).

2.2.2.2 Postnational Identity

Najami and Ajjawi (2014) discuss the role of a multi-layer identity. They read in Darwish "a development of the concept of "being" since his early works until his final poems" (Abir Najami and Hussain Ajjawi .p. 276). The concept is "voiced first through the young poet's call to rebel and resist occupation, and later, after building a comprehensive perspective of the political and historical surrounding, through the mature poet's demand for justice" (Abir Najami and Hussain Ajjawi .p. 276). For this, the authors observe, Darwish has contemplated universal themes such as life, death and reconciliation, and equally he has appreciated the meaning of existence (Abir Najami and Hussain Ajjawi .p. 276), all to help form multiple identities– the individual, the national and the human– that emerge as one identity.

This complicated identity is also examined in spatial terms in Mena's (2009) *The Geography of Poetry: Mahmoud Darwish and Postnational Identity*. Mena ascertains that some of the texts by Darwish are at once anti-colonial and postnational (Erica Mena, 2009, p. 111). They are "anti-colonial because they are intended to fight for the Palestinian cause, and they are postnational because they fight the static notion of identity (Mena, 2009, p. 111). Mena finds a universal theme in Darwish's poetry: an identity that can be claimed by any human being. She argues that Darwish was very capable of destabilizing temporality and territory to create an identity that can always fit into a universal system. Mena argues that the poet, through words, has established a community that transcends geography and time. For Darwish, Mena continues, identity is extra-temporal and can only exist through language. Mena provides a postcolonial analysis to conclude that Darwish's poetry has raised abstract questions about "developing an identity rooted in community as constructed through words" (Mena, 2009, p. 115).

This is also the same finding reached by Reuven Snir's essay "Other Barbarians Will Come: Intertextuality, Meta-Poetry, and the Meta-Myth in Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry" (2008). Snir reads in *Fewer Roses* (a collection of poems written by Darwish in 1986 while he was living in Paris) one persona that represents one collective identity shared by all Palestinians in the homeland and the Diaspora. Yet, Snir takes the analysis further, arguing that the poet was also always tempted to treat identity in a quite compelling, socio-political and, above all, humanistic way, with statements about justice emerging in his late writings.

Jeffrey Sacks (2008) provides an account of Darwish's poetic language that resonates with questions about human existence and identity. When the poet was under siege in Ramallah, Sacks (2008) argues, the language he used echoed with the political landscape of the time, but his language choices—those that cut, constraint, disorient, disfigure, destroy, dismember, divide—are related to a state where a group of people who found themselves under complete blockade, cut off from the world by the massive military machine of the oppressor: soldiers that know only the language of destruction, wreaking havoc and killing.

This line of argument—relating existence and identity—is also noted by Ben White (2005), who hears in *The Red Indian's Penultimate Speech to the White Man* (written in 1992, but the English version appeared first in 2009) a voice of dispossession and displacement, but also a search for identity. White holds that Darwish creates a model of affinities between Palestine—a homeland that exists in every Palestinian (but is not a materialized nation-state yet)—and universal literary aesthetics that express fragmented, desperate realities, typical of Diaspora communities. The poetry of Darwish, according to White, looks into broader questions of human identity. In his attempt to answer the question relating to why people resort to literature (poetry, in case

of Darwish) to find identity, White expounds that literature can easily be possessed by the oppressed people who are spiritually attached to their land.

In an article on Darwish's universality, Mohamed Omer (2005) finds much of Darwish's poetry transcending specific contexts to achieve a national, and even universal, appeal. Omer sees in Darwish's ostensibly simple language rich meanings: "the levels of meaning and symbolism packed into a few words are miracles of compression. He can reduce an exile's sorrow and bewilderment to a single phrase, and does so again and again" (p. 72). Darwish, Omer holds, was able to compress decades of hope, suffering and history in one line of poetry. He could do this helped by his identification of simple things (a flower, a cup of coffee, a fleeting event) to tackle "with modern sophistication the most daunting philosophical concepts— death, divinity, existential anguish, questions of identity" (p. 72).

2.2.2.3 Identity and Exile

Generally speaking, questions of identity in Darwish are closely associated with the exilic experience. Areqi (2014) argues that Darwish examines deeply the themes of home and homeliness, identity and exile of the strangers who spend their lives dislocated. This same idea was hinted at by Ashwani Saith (2005). Darwish's poems, Saith wrote, "give power to the tired and forlorn, to revive, restore, and relive the imagined mobile space called home; to feeling the pain of being cut to the quick by the jagged mirrors of memory, to excavating emotions put away and buried in long-locked caskets" (Ashwani Saith .p. 28).

In a comprehensive study of the theme of exile in Darwish's poetry, Anette Mansson (2003) places the works she studied in relation to early modernism. She traces in the selected poems references to religious sources about the ideas of creation, death

and resurrection. She concludes that Darwish has placed poetry in a position similar to that of religion in traditional societies.

This correlation between identity and exile /religion is explored by Angelika Neuwirth (2008), who studies in her essay "Hebrew Bible and Arabic Poetry: Mahmoud Darwish's Palestine from Paradise Lost to Homeland Made of Words" early and late works by Darwish. She finds that within the poet's exilic experience, he has given the Palestinians a Genesis narrative, created a national Exodus story and simulated a Palestinian return from the Diaspora.

This is a description of poetry of dispossession and deliverance at a time, or as Saith (2005) puts it, "of loss, of desolation, of doomed efforts, but significantly also of truth, hope, reconciliation" (Saith, 2005, p. 28). Saith believes that Darwish's poetry offers a recognition of the roots of the anger the poet experiences and the barricades that the colonizer has created between the Palestinians and the Israelis, but Darwish "transcends these barricades, without denying them or making them invisible, through a simultaneous recognition of the mutuality of traumas, confusions, as also of mutual aspirations of coexistence and peace" (Saith, 2005, p. 28).

2.2.3 Identification with the Environment

Statements of environmental questions can readily be seen in many of Darwish's poems. He used the Palestinian non-human world as a persona to show his views and represent the troubled realities of an unsettled territory. Some critics have examined in Darwish's poetry the relationship between the Palestinian environment/nature and the people. For example, scholars have discussed the conceptualization of identity using elements of nature in many of Darwish's poems.

From my review of critical works on the poet, I came across eight short articles that approached Darwish's poetry from an ecocritical perspective: "Eco resistance in the poetry of the Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish" by Hamoud Yahya Ahmed, Zalina Mohd Lazim and Ravichandran Vengadasamy (2012); "Identity and Land in Mahmoud Darwish's Selected Poems: An Ecopostcolonial Reading" by Hamoud Yahya Ahmed, Zalina Mohd Lazim, Ruzy Suliza Hashim and Ravichandran Vengadasamy (2012); "Resisting Colonialism through Nature: An Ecopostcolonial Reading of Mahmoud Darwish's Selected Poems" by Hamoud Yahya Ahmed and Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2014a); "Eco-memories in Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry: An Ecocritical Interpretation of Memory for Forgetfulness" by Hamoud Yahya Ahmed and Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2015); "National Identity in Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry" by Khalil Hasan Nofl (2017); "Environment and home in Mahmoud Darwish's poetry: an ecological perspective" by Hamoud Yahya Ahmed and Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2014b); "Greening of Resistance in Arabic Poetry: An Ecocritical Interpretation of Selected Arabic Poems" by Hamoud Yahya Ahmed and Ruzy Suliza Hashim (2015); and "Nature and Natural Environmental Literature" by Aakula Jyothsna and Vangala Ravinder (2018).

These eight articles discuss the conceptualization of identity by linking it to the representation of nature in many of Darwish's poems. The authors use ecocritical or postcolonial approaches to interpret a form of identification between Palestinians and their natural environment— an intimate relationship between the people and their homeland. They study the use of peaceful (or what the authors call "green") resistance, which involves natural elements (the moon, the sea, the flora, the sun), all showing togetherness and affinity with the native people of Palestine.

2.2.4 Moral Duties in Darwish's Poetry

The development of Darwish's poetics toward transcending his fixed identity as an occupied subject, who suffers under the Israeli occupier, had corresponded to a poetic shift from local themes into more sophisticated, more global thinking. When reading Darwish's poetry, it is of paramount importance to look at the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from a moral viewpoint. Indeed, while political statements remain central in his works, the system of ethics that can be traced in his poems would offer an alternative approach to the conflict: a coexistence model where the other is accepted and respected (Akaltun, 2019).

Silverman (2019) points out that the persona (especially the "I") in Darwish's late poems is confident about his moral stance, and is prepared "to enter into a flexible, open dialogue with his imagined occupier, and even offer him compassion" (Silverman .p. 139). Darwish even urges Israeli poets to assume moral responsibility for "victimizing the Palestinians" (Silverman, 2019, p. 224).

The nature of Darwish's moral approach in relation to the Israelis and the moral duties of the occupier has been examined by Itzhaki and Boustani (2016) in their reading of the collection *Don't apologize for what you have done* (2013). They find the Palestinians besieged and suffering physically, and the Israelis suffering morally. Itzhaki and Boustani argue that Darwish was able to feel some human side in the Israeli soldier, being forced by the state to inflict pain on the victims, the Palestinians. "The Israeli soldier is often described as someone who has been forced, in spite of himself, to play his role" (Itzhaki and Boustani .p. 146). Thus, the violence made by this soldier "is anathema to his humanism" (Itzhaki and Boustani .p. 146).

This same idea of the poet's appeal to the "humanistic side" of the killer (the oppressor) was also discussed earlier by Muhammad Siddiq (2010). Writing on

Darwish's approach to negotiating the other (the Israeli enemy), Siddiq investigates how Darwish's personas would always address the hypothetical human side of the Israeli soldier. Bringing to the analysis the poem "To Another Killer" (2002: p. 30)– which Darwish wrote when the West Bank was under siege by the Israeli forces, Siddiq talks of "a hypothetical dialogue with representatives of Israeli military power" (Muhammad Siddiq .p. 500), in which Darwish initiates a one-sided dialogue with the killer. Yet this killer is not characterized as one who is masked and invisible, but rather "he is a distinct individual, with intimate family ties and memories, and, above all, a conscience that may be momentarily atrophied but perhaps not irrevocably lost" (Muhammad Siddiq .p.501). But this assumption that the occupier might have a moral duty is inflated by Darwish.

This is in harmony with the reading by Cohen-Mor (2019), who concludes that Darwish would at first have a positive attitude toward the Israeli other, seeing in the Israelis some vestiges of human nature. Cohen-Mor (2019) observes that “although Darwish came to be known as a poet of resistance, he had always advocated dialogue with the Israelis” (p. vii). Yet, she observes, Darwish later remodelled this discourse into one that is non-appeasing and non-yielding due to his frustration with the stalled, dark-tunnel negotiations between the Israeli occupier and the Palestinians.

The discussion (of a hypothetical human side of the murderer) could be developed further with dozens of poems in which Darwish constructs dialogues between the victim (the Palestinian) and the killer (the Israeli). The nature of his poetics ascertains a tendency towards reconciliation, and unlike the reading by Cohen-Mor, his non-appeasing language could be understood as a mere expression of sharp criticism to the Israelis for thwarting peace initiatives, rather than a rejection of such initiatives by the poet.

Notwithstanding the discursive poetics and the non-reconciliatory tone in Darwish's poetry, his readers know that in his later works, he came to defy the Israeli occupier and its killing machine using universal themes (human values of empathy, peace, acceptance, respect, dialogue) that he would support using logic, reasoning, and philosophy—appealing to moral traditions of human duties and rights. However, several of the existing investigation present conjectures and discontinuities in which I will take up in the next sections. The next sections position myself critically against the work of existing scholarly attempts.

2.3 Evaluation of Existing Studies on Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry

In this section, I looked at the existing studies on Darwish's poetry. I particularly focus on themes as they pertain to the present research such as (historical mythology; Palestinian-Israeli relationships; resistance of the settler-colonizer; defiance and resilience; power positions; human values of empathy, peace, acceptance, respect and dialogue; homeland; oppression; exile and Diaspora; conflict over land; identity; disposition and displacement; nature; memory; environment; and peaceful resistance), the theoretical frameworks, the methodologies used, and the findings of the studies. Then, I evaluated those studies and related them to the questions raised by this thesis. This allowed me to identify gaps in those studies and accordingly find a niche in which I can situate my research.

2.3.1 Subject Matters and Themes in the Existing Studies

Authors who studied Darwish's poems tackled and discussed many themes. My review could identify the following themes: historical mythology; Palestinian-Israeli relationships; resistance of the settler-colonizer; defiance and resilience; power

positions; human values of empathy, peace, acceptance, respect and dialogue; homeland; oppression; exile and Diaspora; conflict over land; identity; disposition and displacement; nature; memory; environment; and peaceful resistance.

2.3.2 Approaches and Theoretical Frameworks Used in the Existing Studies

As is the long-standing tradition in literary criticism, analyzing poetry usually draws on one (or more) of the theories found to be productive and relevant. For Darwish's poetry, this is a range of traditional and critical approaches—thematic analysis; narrative analysis; historical and/or postcolonial criticism; literary biography; close reading and social psychology; ecocritical analysis (interconnectedness, green resistance and ecocentrism); femininity; ecological perspective; phenomenological approach; thematic and attitudinal structure; thematic and stylistic analytical approach; and analytical framework. In my research, I will use environmental ethics framework, particularly Robert Traer's (2013) model of *Doing Environmental Ethics*.

2.3.3 A Summary of the Findings of the Existing Studies

Below is a summary of the findings reached by different studies on Darwish's works:

First, Darwish conceptualizes and draws boundaries of a two-facet relationship: one between Palestinians and their homeland, and another between the occupier and the land of Palestine. On the one hand, Darwish creates a model of affinities between Palestine—a homeland that exists in every Palestinian (but is not a materialized nation-state yet)—and universal literary aesthetics that express fragmented, desperate realities typical of the Palestinian Diaspora. On the other hand, Darwish would at first have a positive attitude toward the Israeli other, seeing in them some vestiges of human nature.

Second, the poet rejects the hegemony narrative found in Israeli history books. Darwish did two things in this regard: deconstructing the dominating mythical narratives and creating a complex narrative of a national identity that can persist in the face of the colonizer. This deconstruction was possible by constructing and reconstructing history using poetic language. Darwish's language has advanced a negative theology, therefore offering an awareness that is possible only through negating the occupier's narrative. I argue that this negation also involves a repudiation of power, seeing it as an equivalent to violence and destruction. His poetry embodies the concept of how the powerful (intolerant by their nature) establish themselves by uprooting and displacing others. Yet the power in the poetic language rests in that of the colonized Palestinians to rise from under the rubble.

Third, the poetry of Darwish offers the chance to look at broader questions of identity. Sometimes he uses elements of nature to express his identity and his resistance against the occupier. The personas in Darwish's poems are always in a state of searching for an identity— a collective one for the poet himself and for his people as well. The personas could find some identification in the memories of the past or in the imagined future. Darwish shows, through his texts, conscious efforts toward cultural decolonization so as to articulate a cultural identity—a quest for self-determination. For example, Rashad Areqi (2014), who argues that the poet had always searched for an identity— a collective one for himself and for his people as well. Areqi maintains that Darwish was able to find such an identity in the memories of his past (or the future imagined) community. Areqi, however, holds that Darwish has always asserted "his Arab identity; he is one of the Arab people and he is very proud of his root as an Arab" (p. 35). And rather than contemplating only the land of Palestine, the poet, according to Areqi, identifies himself with the larger Arab identity. The poet employs mythologies,

legends, tales, Quranic narratives and Biblical texts to create symbols (doves, jasmine flowers, the wind, etc.) that he would use to resist the occupier. The symbols he uses stand as a source of recollection for the Palestinian long-obliterated history. Many of the poems provide a metaphor of devastation and desolation that history has brought to the people of Palestine, a strong statement of ethnic cleansing that the Israeli occupier perpetrated against the indigenous culture.

Fourth, Darwish's poetry touch on different narratives to situate the Palestinian plight within the broader context of postcolonial tragedies. The poet has recollected and reconstructed the voices of the unfortunate, the wretched, the miserable—no matter where.

2.3.4 Critical Examination against Existing Studies

Following a thorough review of previous studies (their themes, theoretical frameworks, methods and findings), I offer a critical examination of the findings. Since the existing studies are too numerous to be adequately examined in this space, I only focus on the most relevant—those that have discussed identity questions and ecocriticism; these helped guide the analysis in the thesis.

Although these are relevant accounts that have captured some of what this thesis intends to do, three points are still of concern. First, some of the analyses were restricted to Darwish's second-stage poems, which cannot be said to portray the philosophical views of Darwish. His philosophy—not only as a Palestinian poet, but also as a universal voice—is found in Darwish's late works (Butt, 2018). Most Darwish scholars agree that his post-1982 works are the most sophisticated and most expressive of the poet's philosophy. It is at that stage that Darwish was open to various universal insights. Having traveled to major capital cities of the world and attended important international

literary platforms, his poetics came to transcend the mere depiction of a nation's tragedy into a more holistic poetry that delves deep into issues of human concerns, thus becoming a poet of humanity (Sazzad, 2015; Dilbani, 2010; Barahmeh, 2012).

Second, the fact is that the existing ecocritical readings of Darwish do analyze his texts in a limited scope. Taking only two or three short poems by Darwish (the poet who wrote hundreds of poems, some of which are more than one thousand lines each) is reductive and would make it a lot difficult for a critic to make generalizations about poetic motifs in Darwish.

Third, some of the interpretations provided in the readings can be adequately challenged. First, the article by Ahmed, Lazim and Vengadasamy (2012) argues that three of Darwish's poems ("Lover from Palestine" (1966), "Diary of a Palestinian Wound" (1971), and "Psalm Tree" (1982)) all express the poet's involvement in ecocentrism, his belief in the interconnectedness of the human and non-human creatures, and his inclination to green resistance. These three elements, which are quite significant when it comes to discussing ecocriticism, all focus on the preservation of the present state of ecology on the planet (in our case, the land of Palestine): ecocentrism is the belief that humans are part of ecology just like all other creatures and so we should avoid their destruction; interconnectedness refers to the deep connection between humans and non-humans; green resistance, a movement within deep ecology as the authors discuss, advocates the value of nature in and of itself and the equal rights of species on Earth (Heise, 2020, p. 507).

The authors claim that Darwish's poetry uses motifs related to ecocritical concepts to express his resistance against the occupation of Palestine. However, it is very reductive to consider environmentally conscious endeavors as a part of political agenda.

It is true that Darwish's recurring references to nature can be read as a call for resistance

against the occupier, but they can also be placed within the broader scope of his environmental consciousness. For example, there are two lines from Darwish's "A Lover from Palestine" that the authors take as evidence of Darwish's advocacy of green resistance: "You are my virgin garden as / Faithful as the wheat" (p. 82). The authors contend that nature "supports the continuing Palestinian resistance by providing people with food to pursue resistance" (p. 83). However, it is difficult to read in these lines that Darwish advocates green resistance. In the author's interpretation, nature is there to help humans further their political intentions. In moral terms, however, what counts is the right of the flowers in the garden to blossom and the duty of the people to help them blossom.

This sketchy analysis on the part of these authors is present in the other three articles that also focus on ecocriticism in Darwish's texts. One specific example I want to draw the reader's attention to is from the 2014 article by Ahmed and Hashim. In their reading of "The Passport" (1973), the authors claim that the use of images such as "light", "forehead", "hand" and "river's water" evokes "the sense of rootedness between them and from which resistance flows" (p. 97). This conventional analysis fits the lines on a surface level, but, again, the authors ignore the fact that Darwish's poetry addresses broader issues of ecological ethics, namely the environmental defiance of human centeredness – a challenge to the realities of activism and equally a representation of good characters and human relationships with the natural world.

At the level of the theoretical approaches used, one can see that in the same series of studies by the authors, there seems to be what one can call a mix-up of terms. The authors use "ecopostcolonialism" and "ecocriticism" interchangeably, and with this being the case, a reader might wonder why they would use "ecocriticism" in one of the

articles and "ecopostcolonialism" in another article. It could have been much convenient had they distinguished the terms, and the ensued different readings, if any.

I have to note that it does not help to create this sort of confusion in the reader. For example, the authors use the term "centrism" to analyze some early poems of Darwish, whereas such veins in Darwish can only be found in his later poetry, particularly in his third and fourth phases (Mattawa 980)– after Darwish starts to set his poetry free from the shackles of politics.

2.4 Bridging the Gap in the Existing Literature

Obviously, research into moral aspects in Darwish's poetry is still very dearth. The eight articles, cited earlier, have used ecocritical or postcolonial approaches to interpret a form of identification between Palestinians and their natural environment– an intimate relationship between the people and their homeland. The authors study the use of peaceful (or what the authors call "green") resistance by Darwish. Resistance in the reading by these authors involves natural elements (the moon, the sea, the flora, the sun) showing togetherness with the native people. A survey of literary accounts on Darwish revealed that analyzing his works within a framework of environmental ethics has yet to be taken up. To date, and as the review of the state of the art showed, this is a gap the present thesis tried to bridge. The fact is that the poetry of Darwish has not often been cited as a call for arousing interest in doing ethics. This dissertation constructed an in-depth analysis of his poetry in order to elaborate on the ways he portrayed the challenging realities of environmental activism and described moral characters and their relationships with the environmen

2.5 Conclusion

My work on Darwish's poetry is different in that I read such poetry from an environmental ethics perspective. I argue that studying Darwish's poetry from the perspective of environmental ethics breaks a novel ground and contributes to the understanding of morality issues and human's (ir)responsible behaviour toward the natural environment. This perspective does not only challenge the realities of activism, but also interrogates spaces of ethical identity in terms of moral characters and relationships with the environment. An environmental ethics framework is used to understand moral duties and ethics of environment in Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. My elaboration and criticisms against existing literary accounts on the poet reveal that this critical reading has not yet been given a special attention by the studies that have so far dealt with Darwish's poetry.