Rereading Identity Cards: The Early Anticolonial Poetics of
Mahmoud Darwish and their Hebrew Afterlives

By

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Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations University of Toronto

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Abstract

In 1964, Mahmoud Darwish, the late national Palestinian poet, published his canonical poem "Identity Card". The poem, constructing an essentialized Arab identity, has since enjoyed a prolific afterlife in both modern Arabic poetry, and Israeli literary discourse. Although it had become an instant 'hit' with Arab crowds, Darwish himself disavowed it at a later stage, refusing to read it for its essentialist perception of identity. Widely reviewed by scholars, the poem has still been scarcely read in its original context, as the closing poem of Darwish's first ever published collection, Olive Leaves (1964). Unlike the essentialist poetics of "Identity Card", the reading of the Olive Leaves poems reveals a complex poetic subjectivity embedded in a network of intertextual references. These in turn engage in a vital dialogue with the anti-colonial moment and poetic innovations prevailing in modern Arabic poetics from the 1950's and on. Through the rereading of the collection's poems and the exploration of Darwish's own theory of poetics, I venture to re-accord these early poetics their deserved place within modern Arabic poetry, echoing Darwish's own assertion that Palestinian poetry, "is neither rival nor an alternative to modern Arabic poetry, it is an integral part of it, a creek within the creeks of the great river".

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The dissertation then proceeds to explore the Hebrew afterlife of "Identity Card", focusing on two realms: Translation and Mizrahi poetry. Through various public debates and several of the poem's mistranslations, I explore the difficulties of 'digesting' the poem and the manner in which Darwish's presence evokes an ambivalent sense of anxiety, forcing Hebrew culture to face its haunting colonial past and presence. For Mizrahi poetics, on the other hand, Darwish offers a powerful model of self-assertion, opening up a new poetic space where a Mizrahi poetics of deconstruction takes place. This new space is mainly explored through the close reading of Sami Shalom-Chetrit's poem: "A Mural With no Wall: A Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish".
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Introduction

The Afterlife of "Identity Card"

Identity-Card

Write down:

I am an Arab.

My ID card number is 50,000.

My children: eight

And the ninth is coming after the summer.

Are you angry?

Robbed of my ancestors’ vineyards

And of the land cultivated

By me and all my children.

Nothing is left for us and my grandchildren

Except these rocks…

Will your government take them too, as reported?

Therefore, write at the top of page one:

I do not hate people, I do not assault anyone,

But…if I get hungry,

I eat the flesh of my usurper.

Beware…beware…of my hunger,

And of my anger.¹

¹ Excerpt from: Darwish, "Identity Card".
In the 22 of September 2016, Miri Regev, the current Israeli minister of Sports and Culture attended the Ofir awards prizes ceremony. She eventually left the ceremony in protest of the joint performance by Israeli Palestinian rapper and singer Tamer Nafar and Mizrahi Jewish spoken-word poet and performer artist, Yossi Zabari, who gave their own hybridized performance of Darwish's canonical poem "Identity Card" (Bitaqat Hawyyah). Zabari’s initial spoken-word version eventually gave birth to his own poetic rendering of Darwish’s poem in which he rewrote Darwish’s famous anaphoric plea: "Write it down, I am an Arab", substituting it for: "Write it Down Miri/ I too, am an Arab/ But unlike/ Darwish Mahmoud/ I am an Arab from the Yahud (the Jews)".

Regev herself, upon finally returning to the ceremony, offered her own (mis)translation of the contested poem, saying: "I have a lot of patience toward the 'other', but I have no tolerance toward Darwish, and to whomever desires to wipe out the Israeli people. In regards to the opening of the poem: 'Write it down, I am an Arab' I actually have no objection, of course we all agree, but at the end of the poem, which states: 'I eat the flesh of all of us, of the Jewish people', to that neither I nor you should agree. With all respect to you (i.e.: to the audience)...". While Regev accurately translates the opening of the poem, she utterly (mis)translates its

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2 The Ofir awards are considered the Israeli Oscars. They are awarded by the Israeli Academy of Film and Television in recognition of excellence of professionals in the film industry of Israel.

3 For the full ceremony, including Nafar and Zabari’s performance see: Nafar & Zabari, "Joint Performance". The poem continues: "My parents were born in Yemen/ And have recently immigrated here/ I have dark skin/ And a native accent…Write it down Miri…" (my translation). In the Hebrew, the word combination "Write it down Miri" is rendered as a one-word molding the verb tirshemi=write it down with the name Miri, thus receiving “tirshemiri.

4 Regev, "Excerpts from Speech".
closing, which is rendered in the original: "I do not hate people / I do not assault anyone / But... if I get hungry/ I eat the flesh of my usurper / Beware... beware... of my hunger / And of my anger".⁵

In effect, Regev's (mis)translation reverses the original intended meaning, as it substitutes the victim and the victimized. Not only does Darwish's original poem refrain from any reference to the Jewish people, it further explicitly defines its object of vengeance by its oppressing relation to the speaker, qualifying him universally to be: "my oppressor".⁶ By the decontextualization of the cannibalistic vengeance from its specific colonial context, and by replacing Darwish's "oppressors" with the whole of the "Jewish people", Regev taps into the semantic field of general Jewish persecution and the rhetoric of Jewish paranoia. Thus, the inner logic of Darwish's poetic cannibalistic image as a part of colonial resistance is delegitimised, and made into a monstrous practice designed to annihilate the whole of the Jewish people.⁷

Regev's (mis)translation and Zabari’s Mizrahi adaptation are both examples of the prolific after-lives afforded to "Identity Card" (Bitaqat Hawiyyah) within Israeli cultural discourse. However, the essentialist nature of the poem, its clear distinction of colonizer-colonized, and its playful articulation of a subversive role-play, in which the colonized native dictates his 'pre-historic’ history to the colonizer had won the poem unprecedented success among Palestinian and Arab

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⁵ Darwish, "Identity Card".

⁶ The Arabic word mughtasabi may be understood as oppressor or rapist.

⁷ Additionally, in her choice to replace Darwish's original intended oppressor with the Jewish people, Regev appropriates for herself the right to speak for diasporic Jews as well, turning them into the possible future victims of Darwish's vengeance. On the construction of the diasporic Jewish self, as characterized by attributes such as self-guilt see: Baum, Feeling Jewish, 152-190.
audiences as well. Not long after its composition, it became an instant 'hit', and remained in high demand during Darwish's poetry readings, long after its publication in 1964.  

The construction of the a-historical persona in the poem fits with the “essentialist strategy” that Honaidah Ghanim identifies as central in the writings of Palestinian intellectuals from the late 1950’s and on. Discussing the works of prominent intellectual figures such as Hannah Abu Hannah, Tawfik Ziad and Darwish himself, Ghanim follows Spivak who identifies "strategic essentialism" as a way to cope with a symbolic or actual threat of annihilation, and as a defense mechanism used by oppressed groups. Ghanim argues that as a reaction to the essentialist treatment of the Palestinians by the Hebrew regime, they constructed a proud essentialist identity of their own. She further qualifies this identity as a romantic identity, which imagines itself as harmonious with nature, until this imagined harmony is disrupted by the occupier’s violent nationalism. While Ghanim's description fits perfectly with Darwish's poem, it is this very sense of an anti-colonial resistance, founded solely upon the essentialist dichotomy between occupier and occupied, that had caused Darwish to renounce the poem later on in his poetic career.

Indeed, in later years, ignoring its vast popularity and the crowds’ demand to hear it, Darwish repeatedly refused to recite the poem during public readings across the Arab world. Moreover, later on, he publicly expressed his dislike for the poem, saying: “this poem, 'write it down, I am an Arab', I can’t stand! I tried to erase it from my books, but discovered it had been

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8 On the extreme popularity of the poem see: Muwassi, Qira’at fi Shi’rih, 45-60.
9 Ghanim, Livnot et ha-Umah, 75.
11 Muwassi, Qira’at fi Shi’rih.
rooted into the hearts of the readers to the degree that I couldn’t object to it. That it is why I gave up.”

The Original Context of "Identity Card"

However, what critics tend to forget when they discuss "Identity Card" is the original context in which the poem was composed. "Identity Card" is in fact the closing poem of Darwish's first collection of poems Olive Leaves (Awraq al-Zaytun), published in 1964. Yet, whereas this poem won the fervent attention of both audiences and scholars, the rest of the collection has been almost entirely overlooked. A closer look at the collection reveals the degree to which "Identity Card" has been decontextualized from its original framework, since the poetic agenda of the overall collection is anything but the essentialist drama portrayed in its closing poem. In fact, it is my contention that in the Olive Leaves collection Darwish attempts to produce a subjective Palestinian anti-colonial voice, that operates within a complex poetics of intertextuality. This poetics corresponds on the one hand with the general anti-colonial moment occurring within modern Arabic literature from the 1950's on, while simultaneously insisting upon a subjective, particular Palestinian poetic self.

The theoretical foundations of this new poetics of Palestinian subjectivity are presented by Darwish himself in a series of articles which he published in al-Jadid, the literary section of the

12 Quoted in Hebrew in: Darwish, Hamishim Shnot Shira, 76.
13 Darwish, Awraq al-Zaytun. While another earlier collection: 'Asafir bala Ajnihah was published in 1960, it was later on deemed by Darwish unworthy of a place in his collected poetry.
14 For a thorough discussion of the anticolonial Arab poetic movement see for example: Musawi, Trajectories of Modernity, especially: 218-236; In the Iraqi context see: De Young, Placing the Poet.
Israeli communist party newspaper *al-Ittihad* during the 1960's. While systematically unveiling a new poetic logic to be implemented in Palestinian poetics, one which would be in tune with the latest developments occurring in modern Arabic poetry, Darwish concurrently calls on Arabic critics to cease the "harsh love" that they bestow upon the young poets of Palestine. In an article bearing the title: "*Anqidhna min hadha al-hubb al-gasi*" (Save us from this harsh love), he urges them to apply to Palestinian poetry the same aesthetic criteria and artistic judgment which they had been applying to other forms of Arabic national poetry. "Our poetry", he emphasizes there: "is neither rival nor an alternative to modern Arabic poetry, it is an integral part of it, a creek within the creeks of the great river". Literary critics should not therefore uproot Palestinian poetry from its historic continuity and treat it as a special case. This new form of poetics that is adamantly advocated by Darwish is thereafter poetically implemented for the first time, as shall be elaborated in this dissertation, in the composition of the *Olive Leaves* collection.

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15 Darwish, at the time a member of the joint Jewish-Arab Israeli communist party was the chief editor of *al-Jadid*, where he regularly published his articles. Some thirty-two of these articles in addition to three other interviews held with Darwish during the period prior to his departure from Israel/Palestine in 1970 were assembled and published by Khalil, *Maqalat wa-Hiwarat*. Despite their great value, they have yet to be translated into English. All translations from now and on are therefore mine.


The Objectives of the Dissertation

Re-historicizing the *Olive Leaves* Collection

This thesis is primarily concerned with bringing to the forefront the contradictory and essentializing fashion in which Darwish's earlier poetry has been read. In concentrating almost solely on "Identity Card", literary critics viewed Darwish's early poetics as being merely concerned with the dialectics of the Palestinian as the native colonized vis-à-vis the Zionist colonizer. However, depicting Darwish's early poetic voice as articulating a romantic, essentialized self neglects the complex way in which these poems were fashioned. A close reading reveals them to be a part of a complex intertextual poetic network corresponding to the general anti-colonial experimental mode prevailing within the field of modern Arabic poetry during the 1950's. In the face of scholarly indifference toward this collection, the object of this dissertation is to re-historicize the poetics of these fleeting 'Olive Leaves', re-asserting their status within the general stream of modern Arabic poetry. The close reading of these poems is essential in order to reveal how the particularities of Darwish's poetic Palestinian voice fit in with the general mosaic of modern anti-colonial poetics established during the 1940's in Iraq.

Darwish's early poetic agenda reveals the extent to which it is in dialogue with the principles and sensitivities that dominated modern Arabic poetry from the 1940's and on. His overt poetic stance corresponds to the proliferating discourse around the concept of a socially committed literature, or *Ilitzam* literature. As Muhammad Badawi demonstrates, this concept is central to the
understanding of the new modern Arabic poets from the 1940's and on. However, Darwish's early engagement with the discourse of modern Arabic poetics far transcends his adaptation of a politically and socially committed poetic agenda. First, Darwish shares their revolutionary concerns in: "searching for new metrical forms which would allow a greater freedom of self-expression, and would enable the poetry to realize a truly organic unity in his work." As Khaled Furani tells us, Darwish was the first to gradually free himself from the restrictions of meter and rhyme. Second, Darwish's early intertextual engagements with T.S Eliot's poetics specifically, and with other literary western texts in general fits with "the interest taken in Eliot, which seems to be common to all the major figures in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt" and which is "an expression of a much wider concern with modern western poetry in general."

The contribution of this rereading, however, is not limited to countering the scholarly depiction of Darwish's early poetry. It offers us as well, a view of the poet's first, somewhat raw articulations of his future fully realized poetics. The deconstruction of selected poems from the collection and their complex intertextuality exposes the tensions, inner ambivalence, and various considerations faced by the young Darwish, as he sought to construct, in the post-traumatic aftermath of the Nakba, a unique Palestinian poetic voice. The punctuation of these early poetic images foreshadows the later development of basic thematic and poetic concerns. Thus, rather

18 Badawii, Critical Introduction, 225.
19 Badawii, Critical Introduction, 225.
20 Furani, Silencing, 113.
21 Badawi, Critical Introduction, 224.
than presenting an evolution in which Darwish's early 'essentializing', romantic poetry is somehow disconnected from his later poetic corpus, this thesis advocates for a continuity whereby the poetic language presented by the early Darwish in the *Olive Leaves* poems already encapsulates its future development.

**Exploring the Hebrew Afterlives of "Identity Card"**

Framed within the theories of colonial discourse, this dissertation tells a tale of a poetics, that transcends the material conditions of colonialism in which it operates. Even though Darwish was subjected, from his early childhood to the violence of colonial oppression, I claim that he presents a poetic voice which resonates with what Homi Bhabha defined as a post-colonial subjectivity in which there is "no recognition of master and slave… there is only the matter of the enslaved master, the un-mastered slave".22 This dissertation juxtaposes the complex manner in which Darwish constructs his early poetics of anti-colonialism, with the essentialized manner in which he is viewed in Hebrew cultural discourse. The afterlives of "Identity Card" and its various Hebrew (mis)translations are thus analyzed within a settler-colonial literary Israeli discourse, where their presence provokes anxiety and function as a signifier of colonial ambivalence. This analysis, in turn, presents a contribution to the under-developed field of Arabic-Hebrew translation studies within a colonial context in Israel.23

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22 Bhabha, *The Location*, 131.

23 So far there have been two major works exploring the field of Hebrew-Arabic and Arabic-Hebrew translation studies. The first is Amit-Kochavi’s *Tirgumei Sifrut ‘Aravit le-‘Ivrit*. This is an all-encompassing descriptive project in which the writer meticulously accounts for the majority of literary works translated from Arabic into Hebrew. The second work is: Kayal's *Targum be-Tsel ha-‘Imut*. Here, the writer maps the opposite direction, looking at literary
Lastly, this thesis also suggests a fundamentally different manner in which Darwish's afterlife figures within Hebrew literary discourse. The last part of the dissertation explores the poetic engagement of Sami Shalom-Chetrit, a prominent second-generation Mizrahi poet, with Darwish as it is reflected in his poem: "A Mural With no Wall: A Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish." While the after-life of "Identity Card" embodies the persistent haunting return of Israel's foundational colonial moment, I suggest that his afterlife within contemporary Mizrahi poetry, on the contrary, generates a creative poetic process, by which new forms of Mizrahi identity articulations and self-assertions may be negotiated and made possible. The close reading of Shalom-Chetrit's intertextual engagement makes an addition to the exploration of Mizrahi poets' engagements with Darwish's poetry, a theme which has only been initially explored.24

The Place of Olive Leaves and "Identity Card" within Modern Arabic Scholarship

The Portrayal of Olive Leaves within Darwish's Early Poetry

There is a common narrative shared by most scholars discussing Darwish's poetic evolution. In this narrative, his early poetry from the 1960's until his departure from Israel/Palestine in 1971 is generally portrayed as using direct language, being simplistic in its ideological messages, and

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24 The only scholar I know of which overtly relates to Darwish's presence within Mizrahi literature is Alon, see: Alon, Efsharut Shlishit le-Shirah, 15-16.
designed to emotionally stimulate its audience and create incitement (tahrid).\textsuperscript{25} Ali Nasir, in his chronological division of Darwish's poetry, calls this period "the lyrical (ghina 'iyya) phase."\textsuperscript{26} He further notes that the poems in Darwish's first collections are constructed in: "the traditional form of the Qasida, in terms of its musical composition…as to its thematic, it presents us with a direct address full of zeal (hamasah), advocating for the dream of victory and for a better future."\textsuperscript{27} Reuven Snir shares Nasir's view claiming that in his early phase, Darwish had initially adopted the classical form of the Qasida without always maintaining its organic uniformity. He further argues that these poems voiced traditional and national themes, devoid of any special complexity, concluding that: "notwithstanding the poetic revolution which had taken place in the Arab world during the late 1940's, Darwish had clung to the traditional patterns probably because of the required declamatory nature of his poetry, in face of the harsh circumstances met by the Palestinian public following the establishment of Israel."\textsuperscript{28}

Following a similar chronological division, F.M Abu-Murad tells us that Darwish, like other Palestinian poets of his time, and as part of the struggle against the oppressor was "inciting the people to fight, resist and cling to the land. This is why this poetry had been titled: Resistance Poetry (al-shiʿr al-muqawim)."\textsuperscript{29} According to Abu-Murad, several factors contribute to the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Madi, Shiʿr Mahmud Darwish. These characterizations pertain especially to Darwish’s first two poetry collections: Wingless Birds (1960), and Olive Leaves (1964).
\item \textsuperscript{26} Nasir, Binyat Al-Qaṣidah, 1-15. Following others, Nasir includes Darwish's first six collections in this phase: Wingless Birds (1960), Olive Leaves (1964), A Lover from Palestine (1966), The End of the Night (1967), My Beloved Awakens (1969), and Birds are Dying in the Galilee (1970).
\item \textsuperscript{27} Nasir, Binyat Al-Qaṣidah, 10. My translation.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Darwish, Hamishim, 59.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Abu-Murad, al-Ramz Al-Fanni, 23. My translation.
\end{itemize}
fashioning of Darwish's early poems (1960-1970), which were designed to function as a "direct means of combat." Among these he counts the actual historical physical conditions of loss (of land and home), Darwish's immaturity as a poet and his direct contact with both his enemy and his followers – all of which: "necessitates a clear-cut and well-defined poetic language, which presents the issue clearly and directly." Finally, Sulaiman Jubran too, describes Darwish's earlier poetic efforts as: "an attempt to describe the harsh realities of Palestinian existence in the State of Israel using simple tools, a declarative tone of voice, and highly rhetorical prosodic structures...At this stage his writings consisted of a 'fighting poetry in every sense of the word.'"

Marginal Readings of the *Olive Leaves* poems versus Central Readings of "Identity Card"

In the numerous accounts where close readings (or readings at all) of the *Olive Leaves* collection were carried out by scholars, they usually served the purpose of demonstrating the poetic characteristics mentioned above. Still, as we shall now further explore, these poems received little scholarly attention compared to "Identity Card." Madi Shukri uses reader response theory in his general reading of Darwish's poetry. He maintains that Darwish's imagined reader has a well-defined role, and that accordingly the poem is composed in order to: "motivate the addressee, teach him, enlighten him, sharpen his aesthetic perception, embitter his taste or make him ponder certain questions." From this perspective, Shukri offers a brief reading of two poems from the

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"Olive Leaves" collection: "To the Reader" and "A Letter from Exile." In his reading of "To The Reader" he emphasizes how both the direct address of the speaker to his reader addressee and the catchy tempo of the poem testify to Darwish's desire to emotionally incite and motivate his reader toward political action.

Likewise, his discussion of "A Letter from Exile" illustrates how through the emotional description of pain and sorrow characteristic of exiled life, the poem aims at producing within its readers a rebellious and resistant stance. It is because the poem describes exile solely as a short-term historical condition that it produces meaning with only a partial effect, lacking any general philosophical flavor. Shukri concludes his discussion of the poem by claiming that: "The poem falls into the pits of 'Realism', wailing and crying. Even if these facts are in fact tragic, it also falls into the pits of traditional formative rhetoric, and direct language, using unilateral meaning." Abu-Murad's reading of another poem from the collection produces a similar conclusion. Following a short citation from the poem "On Poetry" (ʻAn al-Shiʿr), he acknowledges the simplicity of language and structures: "Words come close to the language of the masses so that they can easily and quickly understand and preserve it. The language tends toward the use of popular phrases nearly approximating spoken language, while it takes little effort to transform it into poetic suggestive language."

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33 Interestingly, both these poems will be thoroughly discussed in the first and second chapters of this dissertation.
34 Shukri, Shiʿr, 23.
Reflecting upon Watad's work will move us toward the realization of the evident imbalance between the scarce scholarly attention given to the reading of the *Olive Leaves* poems and the fervent attention afforded to its final poem, "Identity Card". Her project is concerned with reading what she calls the "Identity Poem" throughout Darwish's overall poetics. She distinguishes three different periods within Darwish's biography, each corresponding to three different types of identity. The first spans 1960-1977 and is characterized by a concern with collective identity, the second period, from 1983-1995, is regarded by her as dealing with "a journey to discover the absence within language," while the third phase taking place from 1995-2005 is defined as depicting a meta-identity and as leading from a state of separation to a state of reconciliation. For each of these various phases, Watad chooses a set of specific poems which she then analyzes closely.

In the case of the first phase, that of collective identity, she provides an overview of Darwish's first two collections, *Wingless Birds* and *Olive Leaves*. Upon analyzing the *Olive Leaves* collection she firstly, and as part of her general aesthetic structural approach, gives a linguistic investigation of the poems' different titles. Thereafter, she (like Shukri whose scholarship was surveyed earlier) dedicates several lines to the opening poem of *Olive Leaves*. Similarly to Shukri, she portrays the relationship between the poet and his reader as, "A relationship characterized by rhetoric and direct orientation, which indicates that the entire collection


37 Darwish, *ʿAsafir*.

———. *Awraq*

38 The poem, whose reading will be at the center of the first chapter is probably acknowledged by both scholars because it is the first poem of the collection and because it addresses 'the reader'.

intensively evokes this relationship [with the audience- n.s] and implicates the reader or guides him in dealing with these poems.“39 Thereafter, Watad moves on to a multi-staged reading of "Identity Card". Her reading commences with a pre-reading stage affording both a linguistic and a semantic analysis of the poem's title, followed by a first general reading of the whole poem, and finally a close and thorough reading of the entire poem.40

Watad presents the most elaborate poetic analysis I encountered of "Identity Card", but the historical context of its composition, the various alterations inserted by Darwish and his later reluctance toward its reading, are explored most extensively by Muwassi (mentioned briefly in the first section of the introduction).41 Snir too, while refraining from mentioning any other of the collection's poems, devotes a full two pages to the discussion of "Identity Card". He especially emphasizes the essentialist identity perception which it manifests and Darwish's later ambivalence toward its composition.42 These are just three examples of prominent Darwish scholars who devoted great attention to "Identity Card", in an isolated manner, without relating to the other poems appearing within the collection. The extent to which this poem has been


40 Fahmawi-Watad, *Fi Hudrat*, 99-120.

41 Muwassi, *Qira'at*, 45-60. Muwassi's account of the different alterations Darwish had made in the poem will be discussed in length in the third chapter of the dissertation.

42 Darwish, *Hamishim*, 75-76. Snir's discussion of the poem appears within his extensive introduction to this first comprehensive anthology of Darwish's poetry translated into Hebrew. It is no coincidence that the only poem Snir chooses to translate from the *Olive Leaves* is "Identity Card".
quoted, reread and analyzed is so vast that I may not fully account for it here, however I have highlighted the most prevalent critical approaches toward the poem.\textsuperscript{43}

**Fahri Saleh’s call for a Rereading of Palestinian Resistance Poetry**

The vast majority of scholars, as I have demonstrated, concentrate on the exploration of *Identity Card* and have failed to historicize the important and complex poetics presented overall in the *Olive Leaves* collection. However, there have been some voices advocating the need for a reassessment and a rereading of the 1950-1960 legacy of early Palestinian Resistance Poetry in general, and of Darwish's poetry specifically. Perhaps the most powerful intellectual voice calling for such a revision is that of Fahri Saleh.\textsuperscript{44} In his article: "The Palestinian Intifada Reflected Poetically and Literary: Isn't Palestinian Resistance Literature worthy of a Rereading?" he fundamentally calls for a reexamination of the Palestinian literature historically branded as Resistance Literature".\textsuperscript{45}

Saleh reconstructs the historical narrative leading to the reception and to the labeling of the poets operating between 1948-1967 within occupied Palestine as Resistance Poets.\textsuperscript{46} He then emphasizes the spread of the phenomena, connecting the national criteria by which Palestinian

\textsuperscript{43}Some examples of lately published works include: Hamdi, "Bearing Witness"; Mattawa, *The Poet's Art*; Cohen, *Literary Imagination*.

\textsuperscript{44}Saleh had written more than fourteen books on a variety of literary subjects, amongst which are the Palestinian and the Arabic short story and novel, Orientalism and Edward Said's legacy. In 1997 he was awarded the Palestinian literary criticism prize.

\textsuperscript{45}Saleh, "al-Intifadah al-Filastiniah Tun’akas Shi’ran wa-Adaban".

\textsuperscript{46}The term 'resistance poets' will be widely explored in Chapter 1. Suffice us to mention here that it was the publication and wide circulation of Ghassan Kanafani’s *Adab al-Muqawamah fi Filastin al-Muhtallah* in 1966 that accorded the term 'resistance poets' its decisive discursive place within the description of the poetry written between 1948-1967 in occupied Palestine.
literature had been judged with the rise of the P.L.O in 1982. Because of the strong relationship established between the political/national and the literary (especially the poetic) any Palestinian literature dealing thematically with subjects outside the scope of "the Resistance" was marginalized and deemed aesthetically inferior or irrelevant.

Although Saleh limits the chronological reign of this 'national' aesthetic criteria to Darwish's departure of Palestine in 1971, he nevertheless claims that with the rise of the P.L.O many poetic voices had ascended to successes based on the same 'resistance' artistic criteria. Emphasizing the biased manner through which modern Arabic critics were reading this literature, Saleh states that:

> What the critics and scholars were exploring were not the aesthetics of these poems, and the manner by which they expressed the meaning of oppression and the spirit of resistance… but rather the direct superficial expression, the shouting and the protest, which gave birth to Mahmoud Darwish's declaration: 'Save us from this Harsh Love'. Darwish recognized from a relatively early age the negative implications which such a non-aesthetic reception might bear upon Palestinian literature as a whole.

These specific limiting conditions of literary reception brought upon the marginalization of other powerful literary Palestinian figures such as the poet Tawfiq Sayigh and the novelist Jabra

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47 Saleh, "al-Intifadah".

48 Saleh, "al-Intifadah". My translation, all following translation into English from Saleh’s article will by my own. Darwish's address to modern Arabic literary critics will be discussed thoroughly in chapter 1. Page numbers are not mentioned since the original article appears online without page numbers.
Ibrahim Jabra leading to their exclusion from: "what had been coined: *Palestinian resistance literature*."\(^{49}\)

Saleh’s goal though is not to expand the category of the Resistance Poets so that it will include these excluded figures. Rather, he is interested in a deconstruction and in a re-historicizing of the category itself. He is concerned that the new current interest shown toward the Resistance Poetry of the 1960's will do nothing but reproduce:

> The error of the initial Arab literary criticism which shrunk its vision of the Resistance Poetry…settling for a thematic description of it as a phenomena, while ignoring both its aesthetic aspects and its promising artistic potential. A potential which was later on manifested in the writings of poets and novelists inside and outside of Palestine.\(^{50}\)

What Saleh is offering instead is the rereading of the concept of *Resistance Literature*, and its "inclusion within its wider Arabic and global scope, that includes the overall resistance of colonialism, settlements and occupation, striving to locate the Palestinian experience at the center of deep humanist literature which narrates and intertwines the happenings of those who are oppressed upon this earth".\(^{51}\) From this general appeal, Saleh finally specifically mentions that a rereading of Darwish's early poetry would offer critics the very opportunity of:

\(^{49}\) Saleh, "al-Intifadah".

\(^{50}\) Saleh, "al-Intifadah".

\(^{51}\) Saleh, "al-Intifadah". For a more modest articulation of a similar proposal see: Shukri, "ʻAsfur al-Janah am Ta‘ir al-Nar", 9-10. Shukri claims that because the appreciation of Darwish's poetry had always been contaminated by the political, there is a need to reevaluate the poetry he had written before leaving the “occupied land”.

resurrecting the concept of Palestinian Resistance Literature in a manner which will avoid exploring the superficiality of Darwish's poetical practice and its emotional appearance. Rather they should first reread Darwish's experimentation within its original historical context and then turn to the exploration of his aesthetics, and to the impact they produce upon our deeper understanding of contemporary Palestinian experience. They should also turn to the study of the correlation between Darwish's poetical experimentation and the general poetic and cultural humanistic achievements, so that the issue of Palestine is placed at the heart of modern human consciousness.\textsuperscript{52}

To a large extent, this dissertation is a direct response to Fahri's appeal, in that the first and second chapters of this thesis aim – through the close reading of poems from the \textit{Olive Leaves} collection – to resituate Darwish's early poetics within the general context of modern anti-colonial Arabic poetics. Since we have mentioned Fahri's theoretical appeal, we should also acknowledge Darraj's somewhat timid, very general reading which points to the importance and to the constitutive moment of the \textit{Olive Leaves} collection.\textsuperscript{53} Darraj is perhaps the only scholar who goes beyond the superficial analysis of the opening poem \textit{To the Reader}, and attempts to somewhat decipher the wider meaning of Darwish's appeal in the poem.

He acknowledges the central place accorded to 'wrath' within this poem, indicating that the internal wrath of the speaker gives birth to an embodiment of this wrath as poetry. He then ties this wrath to the fact that the speaker in the poem: "advises the reader to abandon 'whispered

\textsuperscript{52} Saleh, "al-Intifadah".

\textsuperscript{53} Darraj, "Transfigurations in the Image", 57-78.
While Darraj acknowledges that:
"Whatever the meaning young Darwish assigned to the poet and the idea of poetry, he was laying a new poetic foundation for new times that embraced a prophetic poetry and a Palestine free of imperfection and corruption", his analysis of a new poetic subjectivity and of its particular punctuation is cut short, as he reverts to the general, already known formula of describing Darwish's early poetry as a romantic poetry in which: "Palestine becomes nothing but an extension of the poet or one of his manifestation, and the land, lost and regained, will be a qualitative space embodied in the poet."  
Ironically then, and contrary to his own expectations, Darwish's essentialist construction of Palestinian identity in *Identity Card* had come to represent, despite his own protests, his early poetical identity-card as well. By offering a close rereading of the *Olive Leaves* poems this dissertation wishes to transcend and expand the limits of this somewhat narrow perception of Darwish's earliest poetic collection.

"A Mural with no Wall": Sami Shalom-Chetrit's Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish

The Anti-Hegemonic Poetics of Mizrahi Literature

Literary and academic discourse around Mizrahi literature and its meaning has proliferated during the past three decades in and outside of Israel. Various scholars have attempted to qualify this

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54 Darraj, "Transfigurations", 62.
55 Darraj, "Transfigurations", 59.
56 The term *Mizrahi* literature generally designates the literature written by Jews who had immigrated to Israel from Arab speaking countries, and their descendants.
literature and stress its unique place within the landscape of Hebrew literature.\textsuperscript{57} Oppenheimer characterizes Mizrahi poets as possessing a consciousness of immigration, which pertains to their sense of time, space and perception of body.\textsuperscript{58} Thus, he defines Mizrahi literature in general, and specifically poetry, as posing an alternative to the mainstream, canonical Zionist oriented literary discourse. For Oppenheimer, Mizrahi literature's antagonistic position enables it to exist within a rich space of repressed cultural possibilities, and establish new channels of writing and artistic representation. Importantly, he acknowledges the fact that it possesses a heterogenous identity, created as a result of the traumatic encounter between Jews immigrating from Muslim countries, and Zionist Israeli culture which had been fundamentally Eurocentric.

Similarly, Alcalay views Mizrahi poetry, as a form of exilic poetry, arguing that Mizrahi writers generally reject Zionist historiography.\textsuperscript{59} While both scholars insist on Mizrahi literature's sense of broken continuity in relation to Arabic literature and culture, they nevertheless accord it an independent status through which it is able to transcend a dialectical position defined solely by its conflict with Eurocentric Zionist culture.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{57} For a thorough description of the colonial mechanisms implemented by the Zionist leadership toward Mizrahi Jews, following their immigration to Israel see for example: Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims", 1-35. For a testimonial concerning this subject see for example the autobiography of Sami Michael, one of the most prominent Mizrahi prose writers: \textit{Gvulot ha-Ruah}.

\textsuperscript{58} Oppenheimer, \textit{Mah Zeh li-Heyot Otenț}, 26-28.

\textsuperscript{59} Alcalay, \textit{After Jews and Arab}, 262-275.

\textsuperscript{60} Oppenheimer, \textit{Mah Zeh}, 246-248.
Issues of continuity and trauma inform Shohat's discussion of the subject as well.\textsuperscript{61} She emphasizes the essential epistemological void in which Mizrahi Jews found themselves in the aftermath of their immigration to Israel. They were perceived by European Jews as arriving from the abyss of 'Arabic darkness' into the geographical historical continuity of \textit{Eretz Israel} (the land of Israel). Their supposed lack of origin is embodied for example, by the uncertainty and plurality in which dominant Hebrew culture attempted to unsuccessfully categorize them as Mizrahi, the Jews of the Levant, Comers from Islamic states etc.\textsuperscript{62} Shohat's discussion underlines the tension inherent in Mizrahi literature's self-definition, between a solely oppositional position in the face of Eurocentric Zionist canonical narrative, and a complicated libidinal relationship with its Arab roots. She too believes, that in order to transcend and liberate itself from its dialectical place in relation to Zionism, Mizrahi literature must untangle the various forms of oppressive discourses which attempted to define and reduce it.\textsuperscript{63}

A theoretical framework in which Mizrahi literature is able to transcend its dialectical place is formulated by Levy. In her 2009 article, "Reorienting Hebrew Literary History: The View from the East," she calls for a redefinition of the foundational exclusiveness of Hebrew literature.\textsuperscript{64} There is no logic, she claims, in continuing to study Hebrew literature as predominantly monolingual. Instead, she advocates contextualizing it within a larger heteroglossic cultural system. Following Hutcheon, she questions the national monolingual model of literary history

\textsuperscript{61} Shohat, \textit{Taboo Memories}, 330-359.

\textsuperscript{62} Shohat, \textit{Taboo Memories}, 333-334.

\textsuperscript{63} Shohat, \textit{Taboo Memories}, 352-354.

\textsuperscript{64} Levy, "Reorienting Hebrew Literary History", 130.
that has "been premised on ethnic and often linguistic singularity, not to say purity", and advocates for an inclusive Hebrew literary and cultural history.  

Canonical Hebrew literature defined by a Eurocentric criterion must expand its horizons and renegotiate its borders, so as to incorporate the history and origins of Mizrahi literature. Levy's project thus aims to restore the lost, repressed Arab roots of Mizrahi literature in order to undermine the monolingual model of Hebrew literature, and to arrive at a multilingual (Hebrew-Arabic) redefinition of what qualifies as canonic Hebrew literature.

**Darwish's Place within the Discourse of Mizrahi Poetics**

How does Darwish's afterlife within Mizrahi poetry function in relation to these questions of Mizrahi identity? According to Alon, Darwish has been adopted as a “father figure” by a large number of Mizrahi poets. She argues that the multitude of Darwish references, both direct and indirect, in their work, creates a new symbolic poetic map in which his character stands as an obvious source of inspiration. She then very briefly discusses the content (and not the poetics) of Shalom-Chetrit's poem, "A Mural with no Wall: A Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish", the close reading of which will be at the center of the fourth chapter.

Both Darwish and Mizrahi poets share, to some extent, a similar kind of hybridity or dialectic of identity, as they are both marginalized by dominant Zionist, Eurocentric, anti-Arabic hegemony. Of importance here is the fact that Darwish was able to poetically transcend his

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67 I am not suggesting that their hybrid positionality, nor their historical positioning is the same, but rather that both their Arab identities had been marked as "Arab" vis-à-vis their encounter with a Zionist oppressive bias.
hybrid position vis-à-vis the Zionist occupier. While large parts of his early poetry are devoted to the negation of the other's unjust gaze, in his more developed stage he offers a resistance which transcends this narrow dialectics of identity and produces a rich, complex positive dialogue with other forms of Arab and Western modern poetics. It is his successful transcendence, that had made him such an appealing model for some Mizrahi writers, who are also searching for 'a way out' of a somewhat similar dialectic position.

"A Mural with no Wall", Shalom-Chetrit's Qasida to Mahmoud Darwish

Sami Shalom-Chetrit immigrated with his family from Morocco to Israel when he was only three years old. He and his family settled, thereafter, in the development-town of Ashdod. He has so far published five collections of Hebrew poetry and a novel, in addition to numerous academic books on the subject of the Mizrahi struggle. His poem, "A Mural with no Wall- a Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish" appeared in his last collection of poetry titled Jews, a book containing poems written by Shalom-Chetrit between 2003-2007. Shalom-Chetrit's earlier poetic efforts were devoted to the manufacturing of an anti-hegemonic Mizrahi poetics of resistance reflected in the titles of his former collections: Frecha, a Beautiful Name (Frecha Shem Yafeh), and Poems in Ashdodian (Shirim Be-Asdodit). Frecha is a Beautiful Name echoes the manner in which Shalom-Chetrit critiques Ashkenazi discourse by symbolically restoring the original, lost Arabic meaning of the word, Frecha, while Poems in Ashdodian (published in 2003) presents a

68 The tension between the reductive attitude toward Darwish's 'resistance' poetry, and a view that acknowledges him to be a pioneer of a complex Palestinian poetics, is the focus of the first and second chapters of this dissertation.

69 Shalom-Chetrit, Jews.
subversive form of Mizrahi self-articulation, as it asserts an alternative mode of self-expression, which deviates from the use of normative canonical Hebrew.\textsuperscript{70}

At least the titles of these two collections correspond to what both Hever and Oppenheimer branded, following the model of a "minor literature" established by Félix Guattari & Deleuze Gilles, the deterritorialization of the Hebrew language.\textsuperscript{71} Deleuze and Guattari define a minor literature as one which is written in a language that: "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that its language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization."\textsuperscript{72} Similarly, Oppenheimer and others claim that second generation Mizrahi literature, while written in Hebrew, should be viewed as a minor literature, since its writers tend to undermine the major language's (Hebrew) conventions, narrative, symbols and its relation to neighboring languages.\textsuperscript{73}

If the titles of Shalom-Chetrit's collections afford us a kind of a road map of his poetical evolution, then his latest collection of poems Jews indicates a transformation in perspective. Shalom-Chetrit no more locates himself in the position of a minor writer, operating within the dichotomy of the oppositional tension \textit{vis-à-vis} Zionist Eurocentric hegemony, but rather

\textsuperscript{70} Shalom-Chetrit, \textit{Frecha Shem Yafeh}.

\textsuperscript{71} Guattari and Deleuze, \textit{Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature}; Hever, \textit{Ha-Sipur ve-ha-Le’om}, 283-309.

\textsuperscript{72} Guattari and Deleuze, \textit{Kafka}, 16.

\textsuperscript{73} Oppenheimer, "Mizrahi Fiction as a Minor Literature", 98-114.
declares his desire to transcend this tension and locate his identity within the broader, yet more
vague, religious-ethnic category of "the Jews". In some ways then, Shalom-Chetrit's poem is a
response to Levy's challenging question: "What might the Mizrahi writer bring to the proverbial
table that is not a direct product of the encounter with Israeliness? How can we go beyond the
hermeneutics of “hybridity” in our reading of Mizrahi texts?"\textsuperscript{74}

In the poem, Darwish functions both as a marker of the speaker's impossible desire to fully
reconnect with his Arab past, and as a presence which enables the speaker to deconstruct his
Mizrahi identity and renegotiate its borders. Thus, his presence signifies a limit, pointing toward
the traumatic dislocation of Mizrahi poets from the discourse of modern Arabic poetry.
Moreover, his appearance as a signifier in the poem bears witness to the rupture between the
Mizrahi subject and his Arab roots, exposing its unavoidable external positionality in relation to
the narrative of Arabic literature – an inevitable effect of the poet's social and cultural Zionist
habitus.

Shalom-Chetrit's speaker performs a deconstruction of his own Mizrahi identity against the
backdrop of Mahmoud Darwish's poetic presence. The basic premise of the poem finds the
speaker frantically searching for his own voice, as he "bounces" around Darwish's unequivocal
ethical and moral stance, where place and identity are united and epitomized by the image of the
Mural. This frantic, endless search finally turns to be the very existential condition for a new
form of Jewish Mizrahi identity to emerge. While Darwish paints his eternal words upon a
concrete wall (symbolizing a sense of geographical belonging), it is the construction of a post-

\textsuperscript{74} Levy, "Reorienting", 153.
national Jewish Mizrahi identity, which informs Shalom-Chetrit's speaker final position, as homelessness becomes the essence of his new existence: "in exile on motes of air, not here nor there". In the aftermath of a Mizrahi identity crisis, a new/old form of a nomadic Jewish existence reveals itself as the only valid ethical option available for the speaker.

**Reading Darwish's Poetry through Theories of Colonialism and Postcolonialism**

This dissertation extensively employs the historical/cultural categories of colonialism and postcolonialism within various contexts. Since each of these contexts is situated within its own theoretical framework, I find it necessary to briefly clarify what separates them from one another. The first context relates to the general description of the anti-colonial moment characterizing modern Arabic poetry from the 1950's and on. In the aftermath of European colonialism, and the processes of modernization it had brought with it, various scholarly explored the subject of Arab modern poetics as political commitment. These efforts sought to consolidate the construction of a new authentic modern nationalist poetic voice, while facing up to the colonial past and entering a dialogue with European literary poetics and influences. Darwish's early poetries, I would argue, deserves to be read as an integral part of these anti-colonial poetics.

The second context is far more specific, relating to Darwish's afterlife within Hebrew literary discourse. Palestinians themselves have documented their own historical condition as one of

75 Just a couple of examples would be: Bahoora,"Baudelaire in Baghdad"; Pannewick & Khalil (eds.), *Commitment and Beyond*; De Young, *Placing*. For a more general discussion of poetry in this context see: Musawi, *Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition*. 
colonial displacement, viewing the Zionist project as a settler-colonial project. Thus, in his discussion of the UN 1947 partition Walid Khalidi describes that "above all" the partition, "became a justificatory umbrella for all subsequent Israeli actions, including the ongoing colonization of the occupied territories since 1967." In this thesis, I as well, adhere to an approach that views Zionism chiefly as a settler-colonial movement. I follow Veracini (2013), whose work argues that "settler colonial objectives have informed Zionist actions pre-1948, post-1948 and post-167". According to Veracini, settler colonialism is "essentially defined by processes where an exogenous collective replaces an indigenous one". This definition informs his distinction between two different colonial realities: The first prevails within the 1948 state borders of Israel, while the second prevails within the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, namely the West-Bank and the Gaza strip. While the colonization of the 1948 territories is an example of a successful case of settler colonialism, since it legitimized Jewish Israeli presence, eventually naturalizing it, the 1967 colonial reality (in the West-Bank and Gaza) presents a failure to reach the settler-colonial phase; legitimizing and normalizing colonization remained unsuccessful. For the settler colonialism movement, the distinction between the colonizer and the colonized belongs to an intermediate state, to be later abolished and replaced by a stage: "where the indigenous population has been reduced to a 'manageable remnant'".

77 Khalidi, "Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution", 17.
79 Veracini, "The Other Shift", 28.
80 Veracini, "The Other Shift", 29.
distinctions will assist our understanding of the difficulties facing Israeli literary discourse in digesting and translating Darwish's poetry. In its insistence upon the colonizer-colonized relationship, Darwish's poetry constantly reminds his Hebrew readers of the ghostly presence that preceded the settler-colonial phase in the 1948 territories, thus unsettling their legitimized, naturalized status.

In addition to these two descriptive modes where I apply the term colonial as a purely historical concept, I employ it as well when I historicize Darwish's early intertextual encounters. Through cases of other intertextual encounters within colonial settings, such as India's literary relations with the West, I derive the idea that the shift from a colonial to a post-colonial reality is marked, in the literary field, by a discursive shift from "influence" to "intertextuality" a category which thereafter enables new textual forms and modes of expression such as pastiche and hybridity to emerge. While Darwish did live under colonial conditions, I argue that in terms of his literary consciousness he never succumbed to these conditions, and was in fact manufacturing a poetics in sync with a post-colonial frame of reference. Finally, in my discussion of Darwish's Hebrew translations, I utilize the works written by several prominent translation scholars: Niranjana, Venuti and Cronin in a comparative manner. These scholars share a preoccupation with the notion of translation as an ambivalent practice within various colonial and postcolonial settings. Their insights serve to enrich my discussion of Darwish’s translatability into Hebrew.

81 Trivedi, "Colonial Influence, Postcolonial Intertextuality, 121-133. Trivedi claims that while the colonial state is generally characterized by a form of an "anxiety to be influenced", the post-colonial condition settles this anxiety by opening a space for a wide range of possible textual relationships.

82 Niranjana, Siting Translation; Cronin, "History, Translation, Post-Colonialism”; Venuti, “Introduction”.
The Outline of the Dissertation

The first two chapters of this thesis confront the scholarly void pertaining to the composition of Darwish’s earliest collection of poetry, *Olive Leaves (Awraq al-Zaytun)*. They seek to re-historicize Darwish’s early poetics within the general anticolonial moment taking place from the 1950’s in modern Arabic poetry. As previously stated, I view the *Olive Leaves* collection as a constitutive moment in the construction of a new Palestinian poetic subjectivity. With its composition, Darwish lays down the first foundations of a subjective poetic voice that will become more sophisticated over the years, and the uniqueness of which lies in its doubled positioning: it holds an inseparable place within modern Arabic literature, while at the same time its unique historical birth lies in the colonial encounter of the Palestinians with Eurocentric Zionism.

Chapter 1 situates Darwish's new poetics by exploring its foundational principles, as articulated by Darwish himself in the articles he published during the 1960's, in *al-Jadid*, the literary section of *al-Ittihad*, the Israeli communist party newspaper in Arabic. I then proceed to an analysis of the manner in which these principles are poetically implemented within the opening poem of the *Olive Leaves* collection, "To the Reader", which I view as a manifesto applying to the entire collection. Through a close reading of the poem I examine how the poetic "I" constructs its complex subjective identity in relation to the intertwining cross roads of modern Arabic poetics, the specific and unique situation of Palestinian poetry, and Palestinian colonial trauma.

83 See f.n. 15.
Chapter 2 focuses on the dialogic, intertextual dimension that characterizes the *Olive Leaves* collection, bringing to the forefront two intertextual encounters (out of many others) conducted by Darwish. The first is an encounter with the Hebrew national poet of the early 20th century, Haim Nahman Bialik. I begin with an overview of two dichotomous scholarly approaches to Darwish's and Bialik intertextual relationship. The first normalizes their textual encounter, treating them both, in a side by side manner, as national poets, without historicizing the power relationship informing their encounter. On the other hand, the second approach solely views the anticolonial dimension of their poetic encounter, emphasizing the superiority of the native (Darwish) over the colonialist (Bialik). I then proceed to offer a third, more complex reading which emphasizes Darwish's early internalization of Bialik's poetry, and centers on the ambivalent process characterizing his relationship with the late Hebrew poet. I argue that this complex attitude is reflected in a parodic gesture performed by Darwish in a poem titled: "A Letter from Exile"; a poem that is, as I demonstrate, a Palestinian rewriting of Bialik's canonical Hebrew poem "To the Bird".

The second encounter I explore traces Darwish's initial intertextual confrontation with the English modernist poet T.S. Eliot. Here, too, I argue that the initial complexity of this encounter had not been discussed at all by scholarship, because of the historical reductionism toward Darwish's early poetry. Later comparative scholarship places them side by side, as two great modernist poets, normalizing their relationship and missing the anti-colonial foundational moment of their early encounter during the 1960's. Through the discussion of two poems which feature prominent motifs and themes from Eliot's poetics, I illustrate how Darwish selectively adopts certain parts of Eliot’s poetics, while rejecting others. Consequently, Darwish's poetic stance parts from that of Eliot's in its confrontation with colonial trauma. Its emphasis on the native's existential crisis as a result of colonial trauma greatly varies from the Eliot's ense of
alienation and ennui which expresses a fundamental, more internal loss of meaning. Thus, unlike Eliot's ironic and distanced speaker, Darwish manufactures a speaker with a prophetic voice, one that calls for a reclaiming of ethics and desire, reconstructing a lost sense of unity.

As it departs from Darwish's early poetics, the last two chapters of this dissertation explore his afterlife within two different realms of Israeli Hebrew literary and cultural production: Hebrew translations, and Mizrahi literature. Chapter 3 discusses some of the Hebrew translations of "Identity Card", one of Darwish's most celebrated early resistance poems. Reviewing the central place given to the poem within contemporary cultural Israeli discourse, my exploration ponders the obsessive literary attention afforded to it by this discourse. Its haunting presence within this discourse is deciphered in light of Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial ambivalence, and especially by his conception of the colonial hybrid.\(^8^4\) Thereafter, through observing the cultural contexts of three such translations, and through their linguistic and literary analysis, I explore the general difficulty of Hebrew literary discourse to digest the poem, and I give an explanation for its reoccurring (mis)translations.

Finally, in chapter 4, I explore the intertextual dialogue held with Darwish by the prominent second-generation Mizrahi poet, Sami Shalom-Chetrit. First, I locate the reading of this encounter within the context of the current scholarly debates over the place of Mizrahi literature. Thereafter, by observing both what binds and what separates the historical positioning of Darwish from that of Mizrahi poets, I account for his appeal to them. The center part of the chapter consists of the close, meticulous reading of Shalom-Chetrit's poem, "A Mural with no

\(^{84}\) Bhabha, The Location, 162-166.
Wall: A Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish." This reading reveals Darwish's presence as a cultural reference enabling the Mizrahi speaker of the poem to perform a deconstruction of his own historical identity, and to embark upon a journey of self-exploration and self-discovery. In the poem, Darwish is portrayed as the object of an ambivalent desire: On the one hand he appears to be a role model, while on the other hand his presence constitutes a boundary and marks the impossibility of Mizrahi desire to reconnect with its lost Arabness. The ambivalent poetic dialogue that Shalom-Chetrit conducts with Darwish finally allows him to hesitantly formulate, for the first time, the possibility of a new diasporic Jewish-Mizrahi position.

85 Shalom-Chetrit, Jews.
Chapter 1: The Birth of a New Poetic Palestinian Subjectivity in Darwish's First Collection: *Awraq al-Zaytun (Olive Leaves).*

Save us from this Harsh Love: Darwish's Early Poetic Agenda – Between *Ittizam* and Fetish

In 1969, an article bearing the title: "Anqidhna min hadha al-hubb al-qasi" (Save Us From This Harsh Love) appeared in *al-Jadid,* the literary section of *al-Ittihad,* the Israeli communist party newspaper in Arabic. The writer was already an acclaimed young poet, twenty nine years of age, by the name of Mahmoud Darwish. By that time, Darwish had already published two collections of poetry, participated in countless Palestinian poetry *mahrajat* (festivals), and been imprisoned twice by the Israeli military for his “inflammatory” poetry readings. He was also the chief editor of *al-Jadid,* a position enabling him to use it as a platform for voicing his own poetical and cultural agenda.

The gist of his argument was an appeal to the pan-Arab literary milieu to relinquish their positive bias, the 'harsh love' (*al-hubb al-qasi*) that they bestowed upon Palestinian poetry and prose writers. Since the 1967 defeat, Darwish claimed, the major criterion by which Palestinian literary production had been evaluated ceased to be an aesthetic, artistic criterion, and had rather become...

86 On the decisive role played by intellectual writers affiliated with the communist party that wrote in *al-Ittihad* and *al-Jadid* during the years following 1948 see for example: Ghanim, *Livnot,* 71-73.

87 *Awraq al-Zaytun* (1964) and *'Ashiq min Falustin* (1966). Another earlier collection, *'Asafir bila Ajnihat* (1960) was published in the form of a book, but later on deemed by Darwish unworthy of a place in his collected poetry.

a political one. While this attitude might be forgivable and understandable for a short period of time, its persistence presented a real danger to literary development in Palestine. Besides affording some of the young Palestinian writers a false sense of accomplishment, its most fundamental threat lay within the paradoxically resulting tendency to de-historicize Palestinian poetry. Darwish argued that by according it a special status 'outside' the narrative of modern Arabic poetry, the critics were actually cutting it off from its deep foundational Arab roots: "our poetry is neither a rival nor an alternative to modern Arabic poetry; it is an integral part of it, a creek within the creeks of the great river". Most problematic was the overt joy expressed by the Arab literary critic, time after time, as he 'discovered' Palestinian poetry, “suddenly, all at once” (dafʿah wahidah), thus disconnecting it from its true historic continuum.

In the face of this 'well intended' historical displacement of modern Palestinian poetry, Darwish's article represents an attempt to restore this poetry’s deserved status. Countering a culturally fetishized version in which Palestinian poets are compared to a "group of date-trees springing from the arid desert", he guards against this fetishism, insisting on Palestinian poetry’s relational position. Palestinian poets were "brought up by classical and modern Arab poets", have followed the techniques of modern poetry introduced by "its pioneers from Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria", whose fingerprints within it, "may easily be traced by the critic".

89 This defeat is commonly referred to as the Naksah, literally meaning ‘retreat’ or ‘set back’. Canonical literary research views the Naksah as designating an existential crisis within modern Arabic cultural discourse, one that was followed by a new set of literary and cultural paradigms. For a discussion of the change within the literary field of Modern Arabic literature following the Naksah see for example Musawi, Trajectories of Modernity, 23-24;

90 Translations of quotations from the article are my own (see f.n. 3 above).

91 f.n. 3.
A Radical Kind of *Iltizam*

Darwish's 1969 appeal was situated within the broader context of ongoing modern Arabic literary discourse during the sixties, with its growing focus on the manner by which anti-colonial resistance should be expressed.\(^\text{92}\) Within this framework, different Arab intellectuals were utilizing Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy of existentialism, and its more literary manifestation in the form of committed literature, (named *Iltizam* in Arabic), as a major framework for both collective and individual self-articulation. According to Yoav Di-Capua while it was true that "anticolonial nationalism was undoubtedly successful in creating a sense of community and opposition against colonial rule", it had been intellectually inferior and limited, and it was "the versatility of existentialism that compensated for this lack."\(^\text{93}\) The question of authenticity had become, "a key aspect of the effort to decolonize the self." Indeed, the philosophical version of existentialism addressed the question of authenticity, while "in [existentialism’s] version as *Iltizam*, it functioned as a powerful political tool, marginalizing the colonially complacent intelligentsia and drawing a younger generation into concrete political struggles both at home and abroad."\(^\text{94}\)

According to Di-Capua's analysis, Existentialism as a world view, and as a philosophy, "tied the Middle East to the worldwide anti-imperialist movement of the 1960s and to its prominent leader, Jean-Paul Sartre."\(^\text{95}\) It further enabled Arab intellectuals to openly expose the mirage of their own supposedly liberated society and tolerant state, as it emphasized that "the state’s violence against

\(^{92}\) For a discussion of *al-Sayyab*’s poetry in the context of post-colonial Iraq See for example: De Young, *Placing*. For a more general discussion of poetry in this context see Musawi *Trajectories*, 218-236.

\(^{93}\) Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism", 1090.

\(^{94}\) Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism", 1090.

\(^{95}\) Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism", 1090.
its own citizens was intrinsic to the process of decolonization." \(^96\) Di-Capua therefore concludes that in:

fulfilling these functions, Arab existentialism acted not as a unified idea but as a multifocal and decentralized intellectual system. Regardless of its contradictions, Arab existentialism has a central place as a variation on the postcolonial theme of self-liberation as it was elaborated by people such as Gandhi, Memmi, Senghor, Fanon, and, of course, Sartre. \(^97\)

To what degree was Darwish's project of a poetic Palestinian struggle for self-liberation and self-articulation in tune with the global modern Arab fascination with Existentialism and Iltizam, as the carriers of a new kind authenticity? Di-Capua generally observes that, "inasmuch as it was deployed as a constructive collective tool, Arab minorities such as Palestinians, women, and Iraqi dissidents used it to offer a penetrating critique of the Arab project of liberation". \(^98\) However, while he devotes large portions of his detailed analysis to the manner in which Iraqi, Lebanese and Egyptian literatures were manifesting existentialism, in the form of committed literature, his concrete discussion of Palestinian literary production focuses solely on the work of the exiled writer and journalist Ghassan Kanafani.

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\(^96\) Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism", 1090.

\(^97\) Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism", 1090.

\(^98\) Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism", 1094.
Reading Kanafani's famous 1963 novella, *Men in the Sun*, through an existentialist lens, Di Capua views it as an "allegory of the Palestinian tragedy of 1948, with the failure of the Palestinian leadership, the death of the omnipotent father figure, the collapse of the family as an existential sanctuary, and the betrayal of Arab allies." Di-Capua maintains that through the death of the three Palestinian protagonists in the desert: "the true and authentic condition of the Palestinian people is revealed in a Heideggerian fashion that individualizes their situation in the world (Dasein): the Palestinian is alone."

Whether or not one characterizes the reading of *Men in the Sun* as part of existentialist Arab modern writing or not, there is no doubt that Kanafani, much like Darwish, had been heavily concerned with the question of the self-representation of the resisting Palestinian subject. In 1966 Kanafani published a book titled: *The Literature of Resistance in Palestine 1948-1966* followed by the publication of a second similar book in 1968 bearing the title: *Palestinian Resistance Literature under Occupation.*

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99 Kanafani, *Men in the sun*. The narrative tells the story of three Palestinian refugees who decide to sneak across the Iraqi border, drawn by the riches of Kuwait. There, they meet the elder Abu Khaizuran, a veteran political leader in the lost land of Palestine who is now a truck driver. When he promises to smuggle them in his truck’s empty water tank and guide them safely to Kuwait, they agree. However, the three men never make it to Kuwait. They lose their lives in the water tank, succumbing to thirst, heat exhaustion, and suffocation while their guide spends time joking with the Kuwaiti border police. The novella closes with the driver’s memorable cry when he realizes what has happened: “Why didn’t you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn’t you say anything? Why?”

100 Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism”, 1086.


102 There is an extremely wide body of literature exploring Kanafani’s work. One of the most recent examples is Neimneh, "Postcolonial Arabic Fiction”, which offers an existentialist and Naturalist re-reading of *Men in The Sun*.

103 Kanafani, *Adab al-Muqawamah*.

------*Al-Adab al-Filasṭini al-Muqawim*. 
It was probably the combination of Kanafani's position — as an exiled acclaimed writer in his own right, a scholar, and a representative of the Palestinian cause, intimately familiar with its details — that afforded the term he coined, 'Poets of Resistance' (shuʿara’ al-muqawamah) such a strong cultural validity. Indeed, the term and the books were widely accepted and embraced, whereupon some critics viewed Palestinian poetry as the Itizam literature par excellence, one that surpassed in its authenticity of expression all other forms of written committed Arabic poetry.104

Getting back to Darwish's 1969 appeal to Arab critics to cease their 'harsh love', we may now ask what it was exactly that Darwish was so concerned about. Undoubtedly, Darwish's complaint about this over-zealous attitude is an indicator of his realization that a poetics of resistance that solely manifested the ideological while compromising the aesthetics of the modern would not suffice. However, in order for us to fully comprehend his position, we should observe that this stance of fierce protest was rather new, for only three years earlier, soon after Kanafani published his first book, Darwish had been singing a totally different tune.

In an earlier article published in al-Jadid titled: hadha al-ihitam yuimmuna (This Attention Matters to Us), published in 1966,105 we find an almost opposite position, one that delighted in the reception of any kind of acknowledgment from the Arab world, uncritical of what this attention might entail:

I allow myself to welcome, in the name of my colleagues laboring in the word factory,

the latest attention (ihitam) afforded to our words by our brothers beyond the borders,

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104 Abbas, Ittijahat al-Shi’r, 11-28.
105 Khalil, Maqalat, 190-193.
through which they have been able to smell the orange scent and the aroma of the land mixed with sweat, perfume and blood.\textsuperscript{106}

Here Darwish is far from attributing to critics a negative influence on Palestine's young poets. Rather, their praise affords an incentive to these writers, as it places upon them a new sense of accountability, committing them to maintain their level of performance. Darwish here acknowledges the fact that critics are treating the poetry written by Palestinians in Israel as an integral part of \textit{Nakba} literature. Other critics, he says, were going still further, characterizing it as the most honest and genuine poetic description of \textit{al-Nakba}, while some were even pondering assigning it a central importance in relation to the whole corpus of modern Arabic poetry.\textsuperscript{107}

Perhaps the most striking contrast between Darwish's early positive reaction to pan-Arab praise of Palestinian political poetry, and the later antagonistic one appears in his appreciation of Kanafani's book. Palestinian poetry, he continues, is finally accorded its well-deserved place within the map of modern Arabic poetry; hence, he praises the reception of Kanafani's book, which he views as the most powerful indication of this historic literary shift. Though he confesses that he isn't familiar with its exact content, its importance lies in it creating a precedent, establishing an initial definition of Palestinian literature. This precedent adds 'oil' to the 'poetical bonfire', ridding some of the writers' anxiety over the low number of readers as well as relieving their feelings of isolation within "a nation that had become to resemble a jail".\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{106}Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 190.
\textsuperscript{107}Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 190.
\textsuperscript{108}Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 191.
Only three years separate Darwish’s 'thirst' for affirmation from his complaints about a 'flood' of harsh love, a gratitude for being acknowledged from his rejection of this acknowledgement, which he came to perceive as reductionist. It seems that Darwish's literary acceptance of his role as one of Kanfani's 'Resistance Poets' quickly faded following the 1967 defeat. It wasn't his eager words of 1966 so much as the defeat that had made Palestinian literature a fetishized object of admiration and a model of 'resistance' literature. For it would seems that both Darwish's early gratitude of 1966 and his later criticism of 'that harsh love' point toward something wider which had taken place.\textsuperscript{109}

With the 1967 defeat and Sartre's betrayal of the Palestinian cause existentialism and \textit{Ilitzam} literature ceased being a legitimate framework for the articulation of anti-colonial and national struggle.\textsuperscript{110} Once the dimensions of the calamity had been realized, an essential crisis of meaning took place, emptying the current intellectual frameworks of their value, and giving birth to a new need for a fundamental reconsideration, and an intellectual reframing of art's task. Therefore, the Arab critics’ 'harsh love' that followed the 1967 Naksah should be read as in no way similar to the positive, explosive, optimistic, wholesome expression of interest that met Darwish and his fellow Palestinian Resistance Poets, and momentarily made them, following Kanafani's book of 1964, the bearers of a true, authentic commitment literature, or \textit{Ilitzam}.

The differences between Darwish's early and later responses testify to the sense of impotence felt among Arab writers post-1967. Prior to 1967, Palestinian literature advocated for its place within

\textsuperscript{109} On the symbolic shift in the perception of Palestinian literature following the 1967 Naksah, see: Alcalay, \textit{After}; 94-99; 

\textsuperscript{110} For an elaborated description of Sartre's relationship with the Arabs and his final betrayal of them see: Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism", 1090.
that very prolific and profound experience, so vehemently described by Di-Capua, and accorded
the general name of *Iltizam* literature, a theory and praxis which merged the aesthetic dimensions
of authentic self-expression with collective national, anti-colonial, and pan-Arab aspirations.
However, as Ghunayim, Nouri and others observe, within the cultural retreat that followed the
1967 defeat and as part of the search for a renewed Arab cultural identity, Palestinians were
accorded a new collective symbolic presence. Furthermore, as Alcalay argues, the Palestinian
experience became the new particular-universal. All Arabs, he claims, perceived themselves, in a
sense, as 'Palestinians'.

Darwish's cultural sensitivity was well attuned to this shift in which
Palestinian literature was transformed to become, in the eyes of Arab modernists, at least for a
while, a fetishized, reductive object testifying more than anything else, to the very failure of that
modern Arabic project to produce new forms of self-expression.

It is thus clear that Darwish's dialectic movement between the specificity of the Palestinian
struggle on the one hand, and the (relative) universality of being a creek within the 'great river' of
modern Arabic literature, was well in tune with the wider shift which occurred in modern Arabic
literature following the 1967 rupture. This dialectic understanding, however, had been evident
from his very first attempts to articulate and construct a new Palestinian poetic subjectivity before
1967. The very beginning of this poetic construction, which was to become Darwish's overall
poetic project may be traced back to his first ever published collection of poetry *Awraq al-Zaytun*
(*Olive Leaves*).

Awraq al-Zaytun (Olive Leaves): A Declarative Moment in Palestinian Poetry

Darwish’s first ever published and acknowledged collection of poems was first printed in 1964 and comprised of twenty-six poems. In the following pages I will analyze and contextualize the construction of Darwish’s first representation of a poetic Palestinian subjectivity through a close reading of the opening poem intitled ”To the Reader” (Ila al-Qari’). This poem is designated, as we shall see, as a kind of a manifesto for the whole collection.

What may we infer from the title of the collection: Olive Leaves? Observing first the double meaning of the word awraq as signifying both leaves of trees, and sheets of paper, the title suggests an intimate relationship between the act of writing and the relationship to the land. The olive tree, traditionally viewed as the ultimate romantic symbol of Palestinian landscape is also perceived as the actual vehicle for the poetic inscription of this history, so that poetry is inscribed on it and it is as if writing and place become inseparable. Moreover, with the title's double meaning which binds history, geography and poetry together, Darwish ascribes himself the traditional, pre-Islamic concept of the poet as the oral documenter of the tribe's history.

112 This collection was in fact preceded by an earlier one titled ‘Aṣafir bila Ajniḥah (Wingless Birds). This early collection was however deemed by Darwish unworthy of a place within his collected poetry.

113 While it is a truism in relation to other languages as well, such as Hebrew, in which the word ‘alim designates both meanings and also English, it is still Darwish’s specific choice to downplay its double meaning.

114 On the symbolism of the Olive Tree and its role in constructing Palestinian consciousness see for example Abufarha, "Land of Symbols", 343-368. Importantly, Darwish's conceptualization of the relationship between land and writing here is essentially different from the one he formulates later on. While here place itself is un-separated from writing and the two are intertwined, later on, writing becomes the reoccurring marker of absence, as eventually the only possible homeland becomes a ‘homeland made of words’. For an interesting discussion of this shift in Darwish's poetry see Darraj, "Transfigurations in the Image", 57-78. Darwish is obviously also utilizing the biblical reference of the dove carrying an olive leaf after the flood as a symbol of peace (Genesis 8:8-11).

115 The title corresponds to the concept of Al-Shi’r Diwan al-‘Arab, which means that the poem holds, or in fact embodies the (historical) records of the Arabs, a concept of the classical poets held in Darwish’s time.
One may detect another reference in the title of Darwish's collection. This is the presence of the late American national poet Walt Whitman and his revolutionary poetry collection, *Leaves of Grass*. By naming his collection *Leaves of Olive Trees* (which is the literal translation), Darwish is creating a clear reference to Whitman's masterpiece. Just as *Leaves of Grass* reinvented American national identity in the form of a new poetic subjectivity, giving it a new ground-breaking expressive poetic form, so Darwish here declares his intention to perform a similar move in the realm of Palestinian poetry.\(^\text{116}\) It seems that Darwish's allusion to Whitman has to do with Whitman's revolutionary role in redefining what national poetry should look and sound like. In creating a new poetic American voice Whitman "avoids traditional hierarchies, grounding his claims instead upon the average person, an embodiment of speaker and reader whose likeness is signified by atoms rather than by race, sex, or social class."\(^\text{117}\) Affording the language of subjective individual experience such an important place within the construction of American collective nationalism is what Darwish probably found appealing. Just as Whitman, Darwish too, sought to fashion a new poetic national voice whose uniqueness lies in its ability to express poetic subjectivity.

**Darwish's Criticism of Collective Realism**

What then are these new *Olive Leaves*, and what is the 'old' way of poetic narration that they are redeeming? The answer is afforded to us in its most comprehensive form within Darwish's writing

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116 Upton, "What He has Assumed", 162-177. Upton describes *Song of Myself* as foundational in the understanding of modern American poetry: "So groundbreaking was “Song of Myself” that it defined the poet and his poetry for 150 years—but more, it defined American poetry. By the twenty-first century, to describe Whitman and “Song of Myself” is to describe American poetry—formally innovative, inclusive, idiomatic, and contradictory. It has become doctrine that American poetry begins with, and responds to…” (163).

117 Upton, "What He has Assumed", 163.
in *al-Jadid*. Darwish's detailed account of his new poetic agenda appears in a two-part 1961 article entitled: "My Stance Regarding Our Poetry." In the article Darwish provides an unequivocal criticism of the current state of affairs within the field of Palestinian poetry. He introduces the principles of what he believes should be the new Palestinian poetics. It is my contention that to a large extent, what appears in this article, theoretically, is then implemented three years later poetically, within the writing of the *Olive Leaves* collection. Because of its value as a systematic map of Darwish's revolutionary poetics I will now carefully review it.

Darwish begins with an inquiry into the nature of the *subjective self* within the realm of poetry. Those who reject the self in favor of a complete fusion (*insihar*) with the collective in the name of national redemption should be condemned. The poets who do so are in fact not artists, since they refuse the two most important criteria for the becoming of a true artist: knowledge of one's own self and knowledge of one's own life. With this insistence on the subjective aspect of poetry and imagery, Darwish is well in line with the Arab poets of the Free Verse group (*shiʿr hurr*), which had already advocated during the early 1950's for the poetic image to be drawn from the poet's actual life, so as to create a vivid, evocative, deeply expressive image: "closely linked with his mental and emotional state".

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119 Khalil, *Maqalat*, 20. Although the word *Ittizam* never appears in the article it is interesting to note that in his opening remarks Darwish's position is extremely close to the Sartre concept of *Ittizam*, which seeks a balance between individual freedom and social responsibility.

120 Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry 1800-1970*, 245. This, Moreh tells us, stands in contrast to the static images produced in classical Arabic poetry, which major function was aesthetic, namely to arise the feeling of pure beauty within the reader.
This general opening leads Darwish to examine the specific circumstances prevailing in the Palestinian poetic field. Because of the tragic conditions constantly facing the people, Palestinian poetry had become a means for an immediate reaction to tragic, painful events. This in turn necessitates the category of Realism as essential to current Palestinian poetry.\(^{121}\) By mentioning Realism (\textit{al-waqa'iyya}) Darwish is inadvertently referring to a broad shift in Arabic aesthetics from the early 20th century that sought to reflect the daily and political struggles of the Arab peoples. The extreme, often traumatic nature of Palestinian everyday reality necessitates a strong component of this kind of Realism in its poetry, although it is the form of Realism, and its understanding that is the subject of his attack.

It is the false and superficial understanding of Realism that leads poets to embrace a style that Darwish calls documentary (\textit{taqririyyah}), a style characterized by political rhetoric (\textit{khitabiyyah}) and by incitement that is "devoid of any artistic value".\(^{122}\) The poet suffices himself with a 'static, outer' description of an event, with no personal treatment of the matter and without affording us his own perspective. What is lacking is the pluralism of attitudes toward a certain event or a myth which would than create independent poetic images (\textit{lawhat mustaqillah}) bearing their own unique value. The end result, Darwish continues, is an abundance of spiritless poems, quickly forgotten, poems that are more a quick reply to the anxiety provoked by political events than anything else.\(^{123}\) Darwish admits that these poems that "weep and weep, with no self-awareness nor object' are especially characteristic considering the fact that these poets were born into "the heart of

\(^{121}\) Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 20-21.

\(^{122}\) Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 21.

\(^{123}\) Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 22.
calamity".124 Thus, what these poets are unaware of is the essential reliance of modern poetry upon the interconnectivity of images, which create when read together larger poetic images. There is an absence in the creation of original, interconnected images that will have the ability to "leave the imprints of the present within future times".125

The masses, or the people, Darwish continues in his next point, are moved only by a fervent, exuberant poem, that describes an event in a general manner. Out of all the possible forms of negotiation between crowd and poet, the easiest and least desirable path has been taken, one which embraces, as its central goal, nothing more than the satisfaction of the crowd. Nowhere is this more evident, Darwish continues, then in the poetry festivals (mahrajanat).126 While he reaffirms their ability to awaken the national consciousness of the people, he nevertheless fears the degradation of the poems' artistic value, which occurs during these events. In fact, says Darwish, he is distressed by the: "turning of these poems into slogans, so that the only difference between them and political speeches is that they possess a meter".127

124 Khalil, Maqalat, 22.
125 Khalil, Maqalat, 22.
126 One of the latest attempts to analyze the development of Palestinian poetics through a reading of the 1948-1967 poetry festivals scene belongs to Furani, Silencing the Sea, 1-12. Furani sets up a typology in which the classical Qasida form is identified with the post Nakba pre-1967 stage, whereas the period of post 1967 is signaled by the emergence of the free-verse poem (Shiʿr Ḥurr).
127 Khalil, Maqalat, 23.
Old Poetry Versus New: The Anxiety of the Modern

Darwish thus concludes that the "documentary style" which prevails in Palestinian poetry had "paralyzed it…, stopped it from penetrating the senses", presenting a form of social realism devoid of real artistic value, stagnant and repetitive.128 Al-Osta echoes Darwish’s harsh critique of social realism by presenting evidence that Palestinian poets during these years were evaluated solely according to their degree of national commitment. Indeed, most literary critical studies of Palestinian poetry published prior to 1968 accorded a poet with merit exclusively based upon the nationalist content of his poems.129

Instructive here as well is Furani’s analysis of the dominance of the Qasida form in Palestinian poetry between 1948-1967. Furani’s argument is that contrary to the innovation taking place during the 1950's in the scene of modern Arabic poetry, Palestinian poets were holding on to classical forms, as a reactional step in face of the threat posed by the Israeli regime to the status of literary Arabic. He argues that while poets were writing of secular subjects concerning their national ambitions and their struggle for freedom, they were doing so within a constrained, anachronistic, traditionalistic, formalistic poetic framework.130

128 Khalil, Maqalat, 23.
129 Al-Osta, Al-Aadib al-Filastini. In this regard al-Osta considers Ihsan's Abbas's scholarly work a turning point, since the latter's pioneering work critiqued the lack of aesthetic criteria pertaining to Palestinian poets during the 1920-40's.
130 Furani, (Silencing, 1-12) discusses the aesthetics of Palestinian poetry as a performative genre of resistance, focusing on the poetry festivals held during these years in Israel/Palestine, as events of considerable political importance, where the poets played the role of the leading intellectual figures. The intellectual role played by poets in the pre-1967 era in the shaping of Palestinian national consciousness is explored by Ghanim, Livnot 70-93.. She makes the case that prominent poets such as Darwish and al-Kasem filled the void created in the absence of leading intellectuals who fled the country during the 1948 war.
For Darwish, himself a central figure in the performative poetry of these festivals, all of this demanded a remedy. In the closing part of the article he contrasts the old, 'wrong' kind of poetry with the new emerging 'right' kind. First, this new form of writing must go beyond pure Realism to construct a style which is a mixture of Realism and the romantic. The mixture of these two tendencies will inject into the dreary reportage of Realism a new artistic color and fresh forms of music. While Darwish is using the specific term romantic (rumansiyya), his intention is far from advocating for an actual return to the poetics of Romanticism. Rather, his usage of the term is much subtler, as the romantic here should be read as a synonym for poetic imagination, a signifier used to qualify a certain subjective, more complex use of imagery.

Darwish’s refined implementation of the term becomes clearer when one observes its use in another article he writes later on the same year. In the third part of the article "Three Collections in Modern Poetry"133, Darwish reviews Fadwa Tuqan's latest collection: "While the poet Fadwa Tuqan rids herself of the romantic in its lost dead sense, which prevailed and has had its hay day almost half a century ago, she combines the romantic with glimpses of realism intertwined with philosophical contemplations". He goes on concluding that "This is the only outlet through which Fadwa..."

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131 Khalil, Maqalat, 23-24.
132 Khalil, Maqalat, 23.
133 Khalil, Maqalat, 44-51.
134 Khalil, Maqalat, 47. The Palestinian poet, Fadwa Tuqan was born in Nablus in 1917, the younger sister of Ibrahim Tuqan, himself a renown Palestinian poet. Fadwa began writing poetry as a young girl. Overall, she published eight collections of poetry, and an autobiography.
allows the romantic to permeate, the romantic which has no respectable place within modern poetry".135

Fadwa's description of love (hubb) in the poem, corresponds to what Darwish had in mind when he advocated for a new poetics. The new desired poetry is characterized by an expressive warmth, and a forceful emotionality (infi’al) which causes it to be indecisive.136 It is precisely because Tuqan's description of love is obscure (ghamid), so that one "understands it, and yet doesn't understand its causes and molecular composition", that it makes a fine example of this right kind of poetry.137 Moreover, Darwish promotes a poetry which refuses to offer a path to salvation, one that does not follow a predetermined formula, and which leads instead to a sense of anxiety. It is precisely the presence of anxiety (qalaq) that is at the heart of Darwish's proposed new poetics. It is not only a desirable aesthetic quality but it is one of the most noticeable characteristics of both the specific place and time (post-Nakba Palestine), and of the general modern condition. It is, Darwish exclaims, the existential human anxiety over man's home, presence and self, that is reflected in the mirrors of all world literatures.138

The old poetic form, however, is anything but anxious: its exaggerated sense of hope is a sign of its falseness. Denying the authentic, multilayered harshness of the Palestinian struggle, it bypasses the true emotional chords that have to do with seclusion, isolation and alienation. It is made up of an old and familiar repetitive formula and in fact, its poetics are lacking in more than one sense.

135 Khalil, Maqalat, 47.
136 Khalil, Maqalat, 47.
137 Khalil, Maqalat, 47.
138 Khalil, Maqalat, 23-24.
It displays a total absence of symbols, and a general lack of coherence within the whole of the poem.\textsuperscript{139}

In his rejection of Realism, his embrace of anxiety (\textit{qalaq}) and obscurity as poetic principles, as well as in his advocacy for a new kind of subjective imagery (adopting symbolism and mythology), Darwish aligned himself with the current, modernist moment which was taking place in the writings of other Arab poets. At the end of the day he claimed that Palestinian anti-colonial resistance, and its poetics of self-liberation should cease adopting an anachronistic poetical framework. Rather, it should construct a form of resistance that is at once specific, while simultaneously addressing and engaging the universal, modern, anti-colonial moment in Arab poetics. Following this contextualization of Darwish’s poetical agenda, we may now fully delve into the reading of his first ever published collection of poetry, \textit{Olive Leaves}, no doubt his first attempt to poetically implement these principles.

\textsuperscript{139} Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 24.
To the Reader: The Basic Features of Darwish’s New Poetic Palestinian Subjectivity

Following this account of Darwish's theoretical poetics, I now return to the opening poem of Olive Leaves, a poem that we may treat as the book’s literary manifesto since it is composed as an appeal to the reader, a declaration titled: "To the Reader". Here first is the full Arabic original, followed by the English translation of the poem by John Asfour:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To the Reader(^{140})</th>
<th>إلى القارئ(^{141})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black lilies in my heart,\n  Flames on my lips:\n  From which forest did you come to me,\n  All you crosses of anger?\n  I have recognized my griefs\n  And embraced wandering and hunger.\n</td>
<td>الزنبقات السود في قلبي\n  وفي شفتي... اللهب\n  من أي غاب جئتني\n  يا كل صلابان الغضب؟\n  يا عيّن أحزاني...\n  وصافحت النشرد والبُغُبَّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger lives in my hands,\n  Anger lives in my mouth\n  And in the blood of my arteries swims anger.\n</td>
<td>غضب يدي...\n  غضب فمي...\n  ودماء أوردتي عصير من غضبٍ!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O reader,\n  don’t expect whispers from me,\n  or words of ecstasy:\n  this is my suffering!\n  A foolish blow in the sand\n  and another in the clouds.\n  Anger is all I am –\n  anger, the tinder\n  Of fire.\n</td>
<td>يا قارئي!\n  لا ترج مني الهمم!\n  لا ترجّ الطرّب</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{140}\) Asfour, When the Words Burn, 194. While I usually follow Asfour's translation during my discussion of the poem, there are a couple of instances that I disagree with his interpretation and use instead my own translation.

\(^{141}\) Darwish, Diwan, 23-30.
A Smoky Landscape

We have already observed the importance of the title of the book, with its double inter-textual reference, locating it both in relation to traditional Arabic poetry, referencing the role of poetry as the documentary form of the tribe/nation, and in relation to the legacy of Whitman and the sphere of modern subjective national poetry. What is the gate through which this new form of subjective Palestinian poetics is introduced? It is, certainly, anything but the expressive celebration of life which Whitman affords us with. Rather, as I will henceforth demonstrate, it is an ironic inversion of that vivid sense of selfhood, for it is a celebration of the ashes. Here are the opening lines of the first poem:

الزنبقاتُ السودُ في قلبي/ وفي شَفَتِي اللهبُ
من أي غابَ جئتني؟ يا كلُّ صلبانُ الغضبُ

Black lilies in my heart / Flames on my lips:

From which forest did you come to me/ All you crosses of anger?

Darwish immediately introduces the poet’s subjectivity by thematizing the body of the poet, while constructing a multilayered image. An inverted image of the self appears before our eyes: Instead of the expected white lilies, which might indicate the inner purity of the Subject, we find burnt, black majestic flowers within. In the same manner, we find lahāb, a blazing flame coming out of the mouth. The word lahāb calls to mind first and foremost the negative character of Abu Lahab,
the sinner uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, who did not embrace Islam and was deemed by the Quran to burn in a fire of flame, a punishment corresponding with his name. The black burnt internal material might be initially understood as the residues of a burnt (Palestinian) landscape, an un-flowered land, while yet in a broader sense the majesty of the black lilies might also suggest the loss of a kingdom, one that refers to the lost golden ages of Arabic poetry, power, and self-determination. The black lily (or tulip) is also a reference to Alexandre Dumas’s famous historic story, where it symbolizes an internal purity. Thus, its image of an inverted ideal acquires a double nature, as it might also designate an inner purity.

Yet what is truly gripping about the image is that it is also, simultaneously, an embodiment of a smoker, depicting the ongoing movement of smoking: the red blaze produced by the lips, sucking on the cigarette, inhaling the smoke that reinforces the mounting of the ashes piling on the inside. Indeed, not only was Darwish a heavy smoker from a very young age, but smoking, as a cultural phenomenon, appears to mirror a collective Palestinian (masculine) state of being. One may recall a somewhat famous surreal scene from Elia Sueiman's film "Divine Intervention" in which a parade of injured and sick Palestinian men gather for a nighttime smoking session - walking back

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143 We have here the first initial, raw articulation of what will become in Darwish's later poetry a key metaphor, in which concurred Palestine is compared with the lost poetic kingdom of Andalusia, both portrayed as a lost paradise.

144 Set in the Netherlands, the story describes a competition where the winner is to be the one who is able to grow a black lily. It is set in the aftermath of a real historic event, the 1672 lynching of the Dutch Grand Pensionary Johan de Witt and his brother Cornelius, by a wild mob of their own countrymen. The story's protagonist, Cornelius Van Baerie, is able to grow a black lily, but is thrown into jail, after his jealous neighbor accuses him of cooperating with the government outlaw Cornelius de Witt. However, while in prison he manages to grow the black lily, while falling in love with the jailor's daughter, Rosa. The black lily provides proof of innocence and purity. He is released and the story ends with Cornelius and Rosa's wedding.
and forth in a hospital corridor. This image though, may be taken to its fullest only when understood as a meta-poetic image as well, an image through which the poet explores the source of his own poetry. There is an interconnectedness, an almost causal connection between the burnt lilies and the red untamed flame of the mouth. Yet at this stage in the poem this distorted anti-ideal entanglement of red and black remains somewhat vague.

Out of the abyss of his inner soul, a concrete, yet metaphoric object appears, sulban al-ghadab, that may be rendered as 'crosses of wrath.' These 'crosses of wrath' emerge from an obscure ghabin, a jungle or a forest indicating both a possible physical forest and a dark space within the speaker's unconscious mind where dark feelings of animosity and wrath lurk. But the source of this inner/outer forest remains unknown to the Subject himself, for in fact he seeks to discover their origin. In addition, the wordplay between ghab as a noun, and ghaba as a verb, bearing the meaning of being hidden or concealed, reinforces the inner obscurity of these crosses of wrath. The curious combination of sulban al-ghadab, almost an oxymoron, presents us with a riddle. Once again, the image counters our initial expectations, for instead of receiving a cross bearing compassion, we encounter crosses of wrath.

The Assertion of a New Historic “I”: Bearing the Crosses of Wrath

With this charged combination, a certain sense of historicity is introduced for the first time in the poem. For it is with the subtle allusion to the character of Jesus, through the word sulban, meaning both burdens and crosses, that the emergence of a historical subjectivity is introduced. Through these 'crosses,' the body of the poet, with its traumatic symptoms, is historicized. That the poet's

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145 Suleiman, "Divine Intervention". The film is considered Suleiman's most celebrated film (it had won the jury prize at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival). It offers a surreal presentation of Palestinian life under the occupation.
body is historicized through a Christian reference might not be accidental at all, for the image of Christ simultaneously aligns the poem with a contemporary moment in the 'river' of modern Arabic poetry. Since the early 1960's Arab poets were utilizing various metaphors of resurrection in order to illustrate the need for a national and cultural Arab revival: Lazarus, the Sphinx, the Babylonian figure of the god Tammuz, and the image of Jesus were some of the most dominant references.\footnote{146}

In fact, as Moreh tells us in his discussion of the symbols used by the Arabic modernist poetic movement: "The favorite symbol is Christ (al-Masih, Yasu’), to symbolize the poet who sacrifices himself for his country and people".\footnote{147} Thus, for example, the Lebanese poet, Khalil Ḥawi, who later committed suicide in face of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, compares himself to Jesus through an image in which his body serves a bridge for the crossing of Lebanese soldiers.\footnote{148}

One may therefore locate Darwish's use of this unusual word combination, and his subtle allusion to Jesus, the Masih, within the broader encounter between Christian and ancient Near Eastern mythology and Arab Modernism.\footnote{149}

What is the particular manner in which the early Darwish approaches this engagement? The assertion of a new Palestinian identity, its so-called 'rebirth', must initiate itself symbolically through the working out of the encounter with this haunting, violent image of 'crosses', but is Darwish here both the victim of these wrathful sulban, and a carrier of a future wrathful crusade?

\footnote{146}{Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry, 246; Frangieh, "Modern Arabic Poetry: Vision and Reality", 22-25.}
\footnote{147}{Moreh, Modern, 247.}
\footnote{148}{Frangieh, "Vision and Reality", 24.}
\footnote{149}{For a full-length discussion on the development of modern Arabic poetry's usage of resurrection mythologies, and on the dominant role of T.S Elliot and Ezra Pound in it see Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry, 216-266.}
Crucified and future crucifier at once? In my reading, the implied interchangeability of these two roles within this unusual and obscure image correlates to the matrix of the colonial encounter, in which the Subject must face the haunting appeal of his crusaders – be them, in Darwish's case, Europeans or Zionists. While what we encounter here is the first, raw, somewhat subconscious manifestation of Darwish's poetics as it relates to this Christian-oriented reference, Darwish's preoccupation with Christian imagery and especially with the character of Jesus and with the Cross is evident throughout his work and evolved throughout his writing.150

Just as the image of smoke production presents a form of substitution on the most physical intimate level of the "I", a sort of an oral compensation for an initial loss, so the production of wrath constitutes a similar substitution in the social/historical sphere. It is through wrath, ghaḍab in Arabic, that a poetic historic "I" asserts himself in the poem. Here is the first articulation of this self-assertion:

بايعتُ أحزاني.. \ وصافحتُ التشردَ والسَّغَبُ

I swore allegiance to my sorrows/And embraced wandering and hunger.

There is here an already very different kind of self-assertion, whereupon the self is able to reflect more abstractly on his position. The fragmentation that overwhelmed the poet in the beginning of the poem is given a sense of coherence, as he becomes a seemingly active agent whose first action is to declare an allegiance to his sorrows.

150 For the latest discussion of Christian imagery and of the centrality of Jesus in the writing of Darwish see: Rahab and Henderson, *The Cross in Contexts*, Chapter 5.
Reflecting upon this very transformation, Darwish himself, in an interview held with Muhammad Dakrub in 1969 almost four years after the Diwan's publication said the following:

The unique general nature of the [Olive Leaves’s] poems is its new form of expression in relation to our poetry. There is a shift from the stage of grief and complaint to the stage of wrath and confrontation, an integration of the question relating to the subjective self and the question of the public. This entails the transformation of the dreaming revolutionary into the more self-conscious, critical revolutionary.\textsuperscript{151}

We have already encountered in his 1961 article the first point made here, namely the call for a new, more subjective poetic form. The second point though is concerned with the content of this subjectivity, or with the kind of poetical persona that should be constructed. The very use of the word stage (marhalah) signifies a desired typology, an intended narrative. There is a national and cultural demand which is put forward here, it is the demand to abandon grief and embrace wrath, just as the mode of complaining should be substituted for a poetics of confrontation. As we return to the poem, we therefore find a poet whose performance of a libidinal exchange from grief to wrath is at the same time in line with a much-needed national psychic transformation.\textsuperscript{152}

What follows however is that 'wrath', once articulated and unleashed, overflows both the body of the poem and of the poet:

\begin{verse}
غضبٌ يدي.. \ / غضبّ فمي \ / ودماء أوردي عصيرٌ من غضبّ!
Wrath my hand / Wrath my mouth / And the blood in my veins a juice of wrath!
\end{verse}

\textsuperscript{151} Khalil, \textit{Maqalat}, 233.

\textsuperscript{152} The making of the committed poet-freedom fighter (Fidaʾi) becomes a familiar theme within Palestinian Literature. See for example, Halabi, "The Day the Wandering Dreamer Became a Fidaʾi", 157-170.
Wrath transcends the borders between the physical and the abstract, it overflows them as it acquires a liquid form. Again, a kind of hellish, anti-ideal self-image is put forward whereby the Subject is unable to control this unleashed wrath. It becomes the vehicle through which the "I" experiences itself. It overflows the blood system, but most importantly it takes hold of the mouth and the hand, the organs in charge of both poetry production and articulation.

**No More Tarab**

This new subject that establishes itself through wrath, makes an almost political decision to abandon his initial traumatic loss in order to carry a new form of articulation forward. Now that he has asserted himself, he is ready to clarify the relationship between this new form of articulation and the public's expectations, for just as a new poetic subjectivity is defined, a new relation with the reading public must be established as well. Darwish defines this new relationship in the negative, as what it will not be, for the reader should not expect it to be neither whispering (*hams*) nor ecstasy (*tarab*):

![Ya Qarne! / لا ترج مني الهمس! / لا ترج الطرب!](https://translate.google.com/translate_a/image?v=1.0&tl=en&sl=ar&text=يا%20قارني%21%20/%20لا%20ترج%20مني%20الهمس%21%20/%20لا%20ترج%20الطرب!)

*Oh reader / Don't expect whispers from me / Or words of ecstasy*

Here Darwish is poetically implementing the carefully crafted criticism we have seen him articulate before, regarding the relationship between Palestinian poetry and its consumers.

Indeed, the reader will not be getting his usual portion of a 'fervent, exuberant poem'. In denying the reader his *tarab*, Darwish is acknowledging first and foremost the traditional aspect of the word which refers to the accepted, familiar way of entertaining. He will not align himself with the common collectivity and its accepted means of expression. But he is also referring to another
conventional meaning or aspect of *tarab*, which is connected to the arising of emotions (whether happy or sad ones), since Darwish opposes the pre-known formula in which a realistic documentation of events is given, accompanied by an offer of salvation (as we have seen earlier in the chapter). Subjectivity is therefore manifested through the double rejection of *tarab*, both as a collective, well known poetic formula and as a container of the obvious emotional chords (happiness and sadness).

The end of the poem: Melancholy and Fire

Thus far we have read the opening poem as an exploration into the initial formation of a poetic self within Darwish's poetic legacy, and as a manifesto of his new poetics of subjectivity. It is with the closing of this poem that the fragility and melancholy of this new emerging wrathful subject is exposed. The poetic persona had assumed wrath to be its vehicle of expression and the emotional mechanism through which it historically asserts itself. The Subject had realized that sorrow and loss must be substituted for a poetics of wrath, but they, as an ever-reoccurring repressed entity come back to haunt him, manifesting themselves in a form of melancholy which undermines the validity of the 'wrath project'.

هذا عذابي...\ ضربة في الرمل طائشة \ وأخرى في السحب!

This is my suffering / A foolish blow in the sand / And another in the clouds

What is most noticeable in this peculiar description of the speaker's state is the word *ta'ishatan*, modifying the poet's stroke in the sand. A grave sense of pointlessness creeps in, as the two spaces of nothingness, that of earth and that of sky, sand and cloud come to interact as insignificant spaces in which the helpless poet finds himself striking aimlessly. While the translator, Asfour, renders, *ta'ishatan* as "foolish", the word carries many other possible negative meanings such as 'aimless,
careless, random, giddy, or thoughtless.' Thus, the line presents us with a relapse into a depressed, melancholic space whose relation to the speaker's wrathful persona is ambiguous. A similar ambiguous movement between national wrath and "colonial melancholy" may be found in the works of other modern Arabic poets, attempting to revive Arab modernism (especially post-1967). Their incorporation of resurrection mythology had an evident melancholic side to it. Thus, for example, in Halil Hawi's, 1961 poem, "Lazarus", the protagonist, an Arabic Lazarus, symbolizing Arabic civilization, not only refuses to return from the dead and be saved, but drags his wife and children into the underworld. Similarly, in Adonis's poem of 1970, "Laments for the June Sun" he compares the Arab nation to a corpse wrapped in shrouds. Other images of decay and despair prevail within the poetry of other modern poets from the 1960's and on, such as al-Bayati, Hadad and al-Sayyab.

However, Darwish's relapse into the melancholic sphere in the poem is a short one, as the speaker returns to conclude with a crescendo of wrath:

حسبي بأنني غاضبٌ والنار أولها غضبٌ!  
Suffice me that I am angry /Since anger is the tinder of fire!

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153 The term "colonial melancholy" was coined by Franz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, 181-216, Fanon uses it in order to describe the state of the native who finds himself suddenly 'abandoned' by his colonizer, and is thus prone to a sense of melancholy. To avoid this melancholy, the native, who formerly defined his self-identity chiefly by his resistance to the colonizer, must reformulate what he wants, now that oppression is gone.


Following the self-defying tone presented in the previous lines, the assertion of the "I" as the embodiment of wrath is now, finally, put in its true perspective. Considering the speaker's torments and loss, considering trauma, the manufacturing of wrath is a necessary unavoidable intermediate stage, something 'solid' to hold on to on the way to a futuristic, more positive articulation of the self. In the alchemy of emotions and materials, in which fire comes out of wrath, Darwish leaves us at the end of this declarative poem with an image bearing a double signification: Fire signifies both the material quality of a revengeful, all destroying wrath, but at the same time it presents us with the more subtle image of the Palestinian poet, as a future Prometheus, whose task is, despite its tortures, to carry forth the fire of a new positive cultural and poetical self-definition. A call for a mode of subjectivity which will at once be a part of Modern Arabic poetry, while working through its dialogical relationship with western/colonial literature, insisting on constructing its new positive formation in face of the former's ghostly violent appeal.

Introduction

The poetic subjective voice formulated in the Olive Leaves poems is embedded within a network of literary references and intertextual dialogues. These references embody an ambivalent gesture: On the one hand they aim to situate, and historicize a unique poetic Palestinian Subject that needs to deal with a traumatic dislocation, and represent its disruption from a more 'organic' historical narrative. On the other hand, their role is to rejoin and align themselves with that very same modern Arabic continuity from which they find themselves separated from. In this second sense Darwish's intertextuality aims to re-situate Palestinian poetry within its original Arabic continuity, echoing his wish that it would be: "neither rival nor an alternative to modern Arabic poetry, it is an integral part of it, a creek within the creeks of the great river".156

It is exactly this artificial separation, effected by modern Arab literary criticism, this fetishizing of Palestinian poetry, which prevented critics from noticing that even Darwish's first intertextual

156 Khalil, Maqalat, 195.
encounters far transcended a narrow definition of Palestinian identity. Put differently, it is because of Darwish's iconic status as a resistance poet, that his early place in the wider intertextual exploratory movement of modern Arabic literature had been overlooked. It is through the many creative intertextual encounters, adaptations, appropriations etc. which coexist within the Olive Leaves collection, that one may realize the extent to which Darwish articulated his project of Palestinian subjectivity through a poetics of intertextuality. Darwish's poetic position within Olive Leaves is similar to that of the various modern Arabic national and anticolonial poetry movements emerging in Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon, which dealt, among other things, with their ambivalent relationship toward the West. One may read these early intertextual references as part of Darwish's specific gesture of associating himself with these emerging modern poetic experiments, thereby situating Palestinian poetics in relation to the wider modern Arabic dialogue with the canonical history of Western poetry.157

This chapter, however, will only focus on two such literary encounters with fellow poets of the early 20th century: The Hebrew national poet Haim Nahman Bialik, and the English poet T.S Eliot, particularly his 1922 poem "The Waste Land". An abyss separates the abundance of scholarly writing surrounding Darwish's relationship with the legacy of Bialik, and the utter silence and lack of acknowledgement of Darwish's relationship to Eliot. This silence testifies more than anything to the selective process of reading Palestinian poetry and identity solely in relation to its historical role of resistance to colonial domination. This reductionism prevented the critics from acknowledging the way in which Darwish was simultaneously resisting Zionist

157 On the development and construction of those different national modern Arabic anticolonial movements of poetry see for example: Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry, 267-288.
discourse, while aligning himself (and thus aligning Palestinian subjectivity), with the wider impulse prevailing within modern Arabic poetry. There is no poet better suitable to prove this alignment than T.S Eliot. His discursive position within the construction of modern Arabic poetry is unprecedented, and therefore it is by underlining and deconstructing some of the ways in which Darwish engages Eliot, that I wish to reinsert Darwish's repressed agency, within the anticolonial moment of Arab Modernism of the 1950's and 1960's.

I approach the reading of these poems keeping in mind Julia Kristeva's revolutionary post-structural definition of intertextuality as "the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another," a definition coined only five years after the publication of Olive Leaves.\(^{158}\) Darwish's poetry offers a perfect example of Kristeva's hypothesis about the constant, rigid relationship between signifier and signified as the principle way in which dominant ideology maintains its power, and represses revolutionary and unorthodox thought.\(^{159}\) A large part of his intertextuality, is indeed motivated by the desire to dismantle and destabilize the processes producing hegemonic and canonical meanings. So, while these "inter-texts," to use another one of Kristeva's terms, may be read as a repositioning of the Subject in relation to canonical texts, they are simultaneously an intrusion to that very canonicity, undermining it's universal status.

By referencing these texts and by charging them with the post-traumatic, at times distorted, "burnt" presence of the new Palestinian poetic subject, Darwish's intertextual references represent a disruption of existing myth, producing a discomfort and an anxiety that undermine the original text, questioning its pre-assumed ownership, and appropriating it for Darwish's own

\(^{158}\) Kristeva, Desire in Language, 15.

\(^{159}\) Tryniecka, "The Faces of Intertextuality", 153-159.
purposes. Trivedi's account of India's literary relation with the West is helpful here as well. He observes that the shift from a colonial to a post-colonial reality is marked, in the literary field, by a discourse shift from "influence" to "intertextuality" (again in the Kristivian sense of the term), a category which thereafter enables new textual forms and modes of expression such as pastiche and hybridity to emerge.¹⁶⁰ As much as the colonial had been characterized in India by the ambivalence of confronting Western influence, the post-colonial settles this by opening a space for a wide range of possible intertextual relationships.

It is with the simultaneous coming to stage of the postmodern condition that the colonizer-colonized dichotomy was undermined, and a new form of hybrid identity manufactured. Quoting Baxandall, Trivedi argues that once this binary opposition is untangled, a new dense, ever diversified vocabulary of refined options describing inter-textual relations comes into play.¹⁶¹ The list includes verbs such as: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address, paraphrase, absorb and so on. Trivedi goes on to argue that this shift "from an almost coercive and certainly hegemonic colonial 'influence' to apparently less hierarchical and more enabling postcolonial 'intertextuality'…may seem to be a form of a belated empowerment".¹⁶²

How much of Trivedi's analysis are we to find within Darwish's early intertextuality? May one apply to the early Darwish, Bhabha's definition of post-colonial culture in which there is:

¹⁶¹ Baxandall, Words for Picture, 145.
¹⁶² Trivedi, "Colonial", 131.
"no recognition of master and slave… there is only the matter of the enslaved master, the unmastered slave". Do these literary engagements of Darwish with canonical Western texts redefine and untangle the bond between colonizer and colonized, signifier and signified, undermining the rigidness of the semantic relations prevailing in the colonial state of affairs? Or is Darwish's (post)-colonial position more similar to Hutcheon's contention that the post-colonial Subject differs from the post-modern Subject since he needs to assert a Subjectivity, and is tied in that sense, as Appiah argues to 18th and 19th century literary nationalism? These questions and the above theoretical references will accompany my readings in the following chapter. Two major such intertextual relationships will be explored: The first will be Darwish's relationship with the late Hebrew national poet, Haim Nahman Bialik. Here, the already abundant body of scholarly writing will serve us to expose the reductive manner in which this relationship had been presented, and the ways in which the literary has been largely compromised for the political. This will then lead to a more subtle, complex reading of Darwish's appropriation of one of Bialik's most celebrated canonical poems "To the Bird", within the Olive Leaves collection.

The second literary encounter involves T.S Eliot and The Waste Land. My discussion of the manner in which Darwish recasts some of the language and metaphors prevailing in Elliot's world corrects Darwish's absence from the elaborate discourse on Eliot within modern Arabic poetics. Specifically, I will compare Darwish's relationship with Eliot to the encounter of another

163 Bhabha, Location, 131.
164 Hutcheon, Politics of Postmodernism, 173-176; Appiah, Anthony, "Representations and Realism", 68-70. As in chapter 1, I will also be looking at Darwish’s own explicit theory about the relationship between politics and aesthetics in order to understand his intertextual gestures.
prominent Arab modern poet, al-Sayyab, with the modern English poet. Positioning Darwish in relation to al-Sayyab in this context, highlights his role within the formative dialogue held by modern Arab poets with Eliot, while drawing attention to the unique Palestinian version of this encounter.

"El Ha-Tzipor" (To the Bird) and "Risalah min al-Manfa" (A Letter From Exile): Appropriating Bialik's Bird: Subversion and Parody in Darwish's Early Romantic Poetry

Early Encounters- Darwish's Ambivalent Attitude Toward Bialik's Poetry

It was very early in his life that Darwish, as a high school student, first came across the poetry of the late national Hebrew poet, Haim Nahman Bialik. Perhaps contrary to our initial expectations, this first encounter was positively perceived by the young Darwish. Years later, in his first interview with an Israeli journalist Darwish reflected on that preliminary encounter. In order to get a sense of their relationship, it is worthwhile to follow the way in which Darwish's reference to Bialik, appears within the general narrative of his discourse during the interview.

In response to the interviewer's remark that the first Jewish person encountered by Darwish had been the Israeli Defense Force military governor, Darwish gives an account of the events preceding that encounter. He was only in the 8th grade when he first stood in front of a microphone to recite a poem in front of a live audience. The occasion was Israel’s Independence

165 Khalil, Maqalat, 244-257. The article was published in Hebrew by the weekly newspaper of the Israeli Communist party, Zvi Ha-Dereh (This is the Way) on 19.11.1969 and was later translated into Arabic and added to the collection of articles and interviews edited by Khalil.
Day, and the young Darwish had been requested by his class teacher to participate in the local celebrations. The poem that Darwish recited was as far as one may imagine from a pledge of allegiance to the newly emerging Hebrew state. It described, as Darwish recalls, “a scream from an Arab child to a Jewish child”, and an appeal to the latter to share his wealth and toys with the Arab refugee child. This innocent poetic cry got the young poet in trouble. The following day he was summoned to the military governor’s office in the village of Majd al-Krum, where he was instructed to cease writing such poems, and told that if he failed to do so, the military governor will terminate his father’s work permit at the stone quarry. Darwish, then in his last year of elementary school, was naturally extremely upset by the meeting, crying bitterly, while the image of that governor became over the years, “a symbol of the evil which harms the relationship between the two people.”

This image was, however, soon countered by a different positive figure:

To my good fortune, a couple of months following that incident, I was transferred to study at Kfar-Yassif High School. There, I encountered another Jewish character different in

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166 The Palestinian participation in the celebrations of the Israeli independence-day were part of the general Zionist policy that aimed to integrate the native population by subordinating it on the one hand to the new cultural agenda, and by uprooting it from its own cultural legacy on the other. For a comprehensive exploration of the Zionist educational policy in relation to the Palestinian between 1958-68 See: Bauml, Tse Khaol Lavan, 209-216.

167 Khalil, Maqalat, 248.

168 Khalil, Maqalat, 248. The hysterical dimension characterizing Israeli response to Palestinian Resistance Poetry is still prevalent today and will be thoroughly discussed in the third chapter of this thesis. The latest case is the one of Darin Tatour a thirty-three years old Palestinian poet, citizen of Israel, whom was arrested on October 10, 2015 in her house near Nazareth, accused of publishing inciting poetry on Facebook, calling for violence and identifying with terror organizations.

169 Khalil, Maqalat, 248.
every way imaginable, the teacher Shoshana, about whom I never tire of speaking. She was not a teacher, she was a mother. She saved me from the hell of hatred… Shoshana taught me to understand the Torah (the Hebrew bible) as a work of literature. She taught me to study Bialik, a great Jewish poet, not for the partisanship of political affiliation, but rather for his poetic intensity.¹⁷⁰

This narrative clarifies something about the way in which the young Darwish perceived poetry. Whether it be his own or Bialik's, poems were never to be comprehended for themselves, for they are always contextualized. As a form of a political performance, they are forever mediated, and it is this socio-political mediation that constructs their aesthetic validity as well. To put it in broader terms, the aesthetic is forever bound by the ethical. So, it is the humanistic character of Shoshana, which enabled Darwish to experience this early, perhaps formative positive encounter with Bialik's poetics. It is only through the mediation of Shoshana, that Bialik’s poems were to be cleansed from their political appropriation and legitimized, in the eyes of the young, already displaced Darwish.

The tension between the national and the personal was not only a precondition for the reading of Bialik's poetry, for it had later on become one of Darwish's main poetic preoccupations and challenges. In a way then, this early encounter with Bialik, foreshadowed a similar intricate relationship between the national and the personal, which Darwish himself will endlessly confront, and attempt to untangle, as he becomes the carrier of the same title, namely, Palestine's

¹⁷⁰ Khalil, Maqalat, 249.
Darwish's complex encounter with Bialik has had its own intricate evolution, an evolution that, very early in his poetic career already gave birth to a highly original adaptation and appropriation of one of Bialik's most celebrated poems, "El Ha-Tzipor" (To the Bird).

Approaches to Comparing Darwish and Bialik

Darwish's response to Bialik's poetry undermines the binary relationship of occupier-occupied, and transcends a simplistic, reductionist political appropriation of Bialik. It is my contention that Darwish's rewriting of "To The Bird" constitutes a complex gesture that binds together the aesthetic and the political, without subordinating the first to the latter. Significantly, the uniqueness of my reading greatly varies from the narrow assumptions and approaches taken by previous scholars. The abundance of scholarship which explores Darwish's and Bialik's relationship stands in stark contrast to the scholarly silence relating to the intertextual encounter between the early Darwish and T.S Elliot. Additionally, it reveals how a reductive attitude is adopted toward Darwish's and Bialik's intertextual encounter. As I shall further demonstrate it is by narrowly politicizing the comparison between the two poets that these different readings

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171 Perhaps the most acute discussion of this tension has been offered by: Hadidi, "Mahmoud Darwish fi Sarir al-Gharibah", 45-69. Hadidi attacks the perception of Darwish as being solely a political poet, suggesting that his love poems in the collection Bed of Stranger aren’t tied in any way to his political affiliations.
compromise the complexity of the aesthetic literary dialogue between the two, undercutting Darwish's complex relationship with the late Jewish Hebrew poet.

Within this body of literature two main comparative tendencies prevail: the first advocates for a normalizing concept of "influence", one that ignores the explicit power-relations underpinning both the poets' work; the other denies the possibility of an ambivalent, more open literary space in favor of a conclusive anti-colonial intertextual reading. These two tendencies will be further explored in some details, so as to demonstrate their shortcomings. These two scholarly approaches were formed as part of a growing interest toward the Israeli as the "Other" following the 1967 defeat. As Kayyal tell us, this process of re-evaluating the attitude toward Israeli culture was especially dominant in Palestinian and Egyptian discourses. While Palestinian motivation to understand and research Israel seems obvious, in Egypt, the sources of motivation were many, and sometimes conflicting: the feeling of national responsibility for the Palestinian problem in light of Egypt’s cultural and political standing in the Arab world, the increased need for accurate information about Israel for purposes of intelligence gathering, and the public debate about the fundamental nature of Israel in the wake of the peace agreement between the two states.

In Egypt, from 1967 onwards the universities began to pay more attention to modern Hebrew language and literature, and independent Hebrew departments were established. As a result, between the late sixties and the end of the eighties, more than thirty master’s theses and doctoral dissertations on Israeli Hebrew literature were submitted in these universities. Some of the teachers in these departments, such as Ibrahim al-Bahrawi, Rashad al-Shami, and Ahmad

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172 Kayyal, *Targum be-Tsel ha-ʻImut*, 95.
173 Kayyal, *Targum be-Tsel ha-ʻImut*, 83.
Hammad of Ein-Shams University, have gained a reputation in the Arab world as distinguished scholars in matters concerning Israel. Their work has been published in several Arabic journals, and many intellectuals consider them to be pioneers in the field of Israeli studies.\(^\text{174}\) Two major trends developed in relation to Israel’s existence. Most of the scholars tended to view Israel as a neo-crusader presence, or as a part of a neo-colonial movement foreign to the region, which has no prospect of integrating into the Arab world. Others were prepared, under certain circumstances, to accept the existence of Israel and a peaceful, if hesitant, co-existence. These two approaches were reflected in these groups' attitudes toward Israeli culture.\(^\text{175}\)

Generally speaking, intellectuals close to the nationalist Nasserist camp, the Marxist left, or the fundamentalist Islamic trend, all expressed a radically antagonistic view of Israel and its culture. They viewed any attempt of a cultural exchange with Israel as a ‘cultural invasion.’ Some of them even denied the existence of Hebrew culture, literature, or language, on the grounds that there is no such thing as a Jewish nation—only a Jewish religion—and that there is no Israeli nation, but only a conglomeration of individuals with little in common.\(^\text{176}\) They therefore treated Israeli Hebrew literature as a homogeneous unit that serves the ideology and interests of Zionism.

On the other hand, liberal intellectuals expressed a more pragmatic approach generally expressing a conciliatory attitude. They objected to stereotyping generalizations, and maintained that one should distinguish between the different ideological and political trends in Israeli

\(^{174}\) Kayyal, *Targum be-Tsel ha-‘Imut*, 90-92.

\(^{175}\) Kayyal, *Targum be-Tsel ha-‘Imut*, 84-88.

\(^{176}\) Kayyal, *Targum be-Tsel ha-‘Imut*, 84-88.
culture. For them, the accusation of a ‘cultural invasion’ was absurd. They also maintained that Israeli Hebrew literature deserved to be studied 'objectively', with reference to aesthetic and literary aspects.  

Normalizing Egyptian Scholarship: Gamal Ahmad al-Rifa‘i’s Linguistic Comparison

Over the last two decades, a comparative, normalizing popular discourse pertaining to the relation between Bialik and Darwish has proliferated. This discourse is evident first within the non-academic sphere (newspapers, television shows, etc.), where it seems that the mere fact that both Darwish and Bialik were considered "National Poets" or "Poets of Exile" was sufficient to produce a dramatic comparison between them.  

This sort of comparison found its way to academic discourse as well, where it followed the same rationale, adopting the basic assumption that a fundamental similarity exists between the historical conditions, giving birth to both these poets' bodies of work. We will call this comparative attitude that positions the two national poets side by side, a 'normalizing' kind of relationship, for it overlooks the power relations between Israel and Palestine and the ways in which it informs the relationship between the two poets. Thus, it construes meaning as a part of an imaginary literary, non-dialectic whole in which it believes the two literatures to operate.  

177 Kayyal, Targum be-Tsel ha-‘Imut, 90.

178 See for example: Lev-Ari, "Bialik ve-Darwish: Mitg'a'ageim le-oto Makom". In this article (out of many existing others) within Israeli popular media a brief comparison between the poets' poetics and biographies is sketched.

179 Within the Palestinian social-cultural context any form of activity normalizing the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians without stressing the basic inequality of that relationship is labeled as Talbi‘ literally meaning normalizing or making natural.
We will now explore the way this tendency is exemplified in the work written by the Hebrew language Egyptian scholar, Gamal Ahmad al-Rifa‘i. In 1994 al-Rifa‘i wrote a book exploring the influence of Hebrew culture on the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish in which he devoted a whole chapter to a comparison between Bialik and Darwish. Al-Rifa‘i’s project aimed at exploring the similarities between the exile poetry of the two poets, despite the differences in details that stem from their specific exilic experiences.

He justifies his comparison in several ways: First, he mentions Darwish's reference to his own exposure to Bialik's poems as a child and to his aesthetic appreciation of the latter's poetry. Second, he draws our attention to Darwish's comparison between exilic representations in Bialik's poetry and exilic descriptions made by other Palestinian poets. Lastly, he draws attention to Darwish's thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language, which puts him in a suitable position to be influenced or inspired by Hebrew poetry. Noticeably al-Rifa‘i’s fundamental assumption is that Bialik's footprints might be discovered within Darwish's texts. Following a four-page long chapter sketching Bialik's literary biography, and after exploring the different etymologies of the word 'exile' in Arabic and Hebrew (Manfa‘ and Galut respectively) he moves on to the main part of his thesis, namely the actual comparison of the two poets' poetics.

Indistinctively, al-Rifa‘i’s comparison moves between thematic and linguistic similarities. In my opinion, the most compelling parts of his comparison are cases where he is able to demonstrate a linguistic connection revolving around a specific metaphorical image that appears in both poets'

\[\text{References:}\]

work. One example is the similar implementation by Darwish and Bialik of the word "gallows" \((\textit{mashnaqah} \text{ in Arabic, } \textit{gardom} \text{ in Hebrew})\). According to al-Rifa’i, Bialik’s use of the word within one of his famous poems "‘Al ha-Shhitah" (On the Slaughter) to describe the whole world as a gallows, is revived by Darwish’s use of \textit{mashnaqah} in numerous poems such as "Ahmad al-Za’tar" and "Qasidat Beirut" (Poem of Beirut) where the word \textit{mashnaqah} reoccurs, signifying an existence that is overshadowed by the presence of the gallows.\(^{182}\)

Another, rather interesting, comparative metaphoric image which al-Rifa’i illustrates is that of the desert. Both poets utilize the theme of the desert as an integral part of their representation of exile. Thus, in Darwish’s long 1983 praise poem, "Madih al-Zill al-‘Ali" (In Praise of the High Shadow) the desert expands from all directions just as exile expands. In a similar manner within the poem "Sanah Ukhra Faqat" (Just One More Year) written a year later in 1984, exile is again located within the desert. Correspondingly, Bialik, in his poem "Metei Midbar Akharonim" (The Last Dead of the Desert) equates exile with the desert.

The textual underpinning of these poetic similarities charges the comparison with a validity which is not as evident, in my opinion, when al-Rifa’i attempts to explore thematic resemblances. These main thematic parallels include nature's expressive role in the description of violence, the impossibility of living in exile, the absence of the divine, and a revolt against the idea of an intervening God. However, far from indicating a unique resemblance between the two poets, these similarities might be seen more as general indication of the mutual belonging of both

\(^{182}\) Al-Rafa‘i, Ather, 73-75. Bialik's poems referred to here all appear in: Bialik, \textit{Kol Shirei H. N. Bialik}. While Darwish's poems referred to here may be found in: Darwish, \textit{Diwan Mahmoud Darwish 1941-2008}. What al-Rifa‘i refrains from doing is to look at the etymology and referential fields of both words within their own lingual sphere, i.e.: what it means to use the words \textit{gardom} and \textit{mashnaqah} in both Hebrew and Arabic.
poets to a fundamentally romantic, secular tradition of modern poetry. In summation, while succumbing to the problematics of a normalizing perspective, al-Rifa‘i somewhat expands the popular trend of comparing Bialik and Darwish side by side. He does so by affording us both a linguistic and a thematic comparative analysis of both poets' bodies of work. However, while some interesting observations and parallels are drawn by a careful linguistic comparative analysis of metaphor and images, the thematic resemblances remain too general as to afford any significant insight.

Al-Rifa‘i’s comparative attitude is furthermore crystallized by way of his introduction where he pays tribute to a previous article addressing the topic.\textsuperscript{183} The article, titled \textit{al-Fikr al-Sahayuni fi Shi‘r Biyalik (Zionist Thought in Bialik's Poetry)} had been written in 1972 by al-Messiri, a well-known Egyptian scholar recognized especially for his research on Zionism and Jewish history.\textsuperscript{184} Al-Rifa‘i describes the manner in which the article stresses the contrast between Darwish and Bialik. While Bialik’s attitude toward the land of Palestine is fundamentally imaginary, inspired by religious books and by Zionist literature, Darwish’s poetics is grounded in the reality of the land and pertains to its realistic details. Al-Rifa‘i then moves on to critique the "biased stance" of writers who favor Darwish's poetry and moral stance over that of Bialik's. He claims that al-Shami and al-Messiri unjustly accord the Palestinian experience a higher value of truthfulness. They utilize what they claim to be Bialik's manufactured, artificial, imaginary relationship to the

\textsuperscript{183} It might as well be the only other scholarly text directly addressing a comparison between the two poets. I myself were unable to locate additional scholarly work referencing the comparison directly.

\textsuperscript{184} Al-Shami and al-Messiri, "Al-Fikr al-Şahayuni fi Shi‘r Biyalik", 83-94. Rashad al-Shami, Al-Messiri’s cowriter was a well-known, Egyptian anti-Zionist Hebrew scholar. The article itself had been published in \textit{Shu‘un Filastīnyanah}, the P.L.O's scholarly journal, whose editing board included among others, Mahmoud Darwish.
land, in order to claim that the relationship of the whole of the Jewish people may be framed in similar terms. On the other hand, he continues, they consider Darwish's description as embodying an authentic, natural, integral Palestinian relationship to that very same land. Al-Rifa’i settles for this general critique, since he does not expand on how al-Shami and al-Messiri actually prove this essential difference between the two poets.¹⁸⁵

Al-Rifa’i provides us with the ultimate example of a 'normalizing' intertextuality, compared to al-Shami and al-Messiri's comparative reading that establishes itself within an anti-colonial framework, for its object is to expose how the artificial, imaginary relation of Bialik to Palestine/Eretz Israel is part of a general colonial attitude, whereas the poetry of Darwish, on the other hand, illustrates an authentic, natural relationship which captures the native's stand toward his homeland.

**Al-Shami and al-Messiri's Anti-Colonial Reading of "To the Bird"**

"To the Bird", the poem upon which al-Shami and al-Messiri base their comparative analysis is not only the first poem ever published by Bialik (in 1891), but is moreover one of Bialik's most canonic, studied and memorized poems. Since the poem will be explored in detail later on, I henceforth present, in parallel, both the Hebrew original and its full English translation:

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¹⁸⁵ Al-Rafa’i, *Ather*, 63-64.
To the Bird

Greetings! Peace to you, returning
Lovely bird, unto my window,
From a warmer clime!
How my soul for songs was yearning
When my dwelling you deserted
In the winter-time!

Chirping, singing, dearest birdling,
Tell the wonders of that distant
Land from which you came.
In that fairer, warmer climate
Are the troubles and the trials
Multiplied the same?

Do you bring me friendly greetings
From my brothers there in Zion,
Brothers far yet near?
O the happy! O the blessed!
Do they guess what heavy sorrows
I must suffer here?

Do they know and could they picture
How the many rise against me,
How their hatred swells?
Singing, singing, O my birdling,
Sing the wonders of the land where
Spring forever dwells.

Does your singing bring me greeting
From the land, its glens and valleys,
Mountain height and cleft?
Has her God compassioned Zion?
Is she still to graves deserted
Only ruins left?

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186 Bialik, "To the Bird".
187 Bialik, Kol Shirei, 9-11.
Tell me, are the Vale of Sharon
And the Hill of Incense flowing
Still with nard and myrrh?
Does the oldest of the forests
Wake from sleep? Is ancient, slumbering Lebanon astir?

Falls the dew like pearls on Hermon,
From its snowy heights descending,
Tear like does it fall?
How fare Jordan's shining waters,
How the hills and how the hillocks
And the mountains all?

Has the heavy cloud departed,
Spreading over them deathly shadow'
Dark, enshrouding breath?
Singing, chirping, tell me, birdling,
Of the country where my fathers
Found their life, their death.

Have the blossoms that I planted
Not yet withered as I withered?
(Old am I, and wan. –
Fruitful days I, too, remember
Like themselves, but now I'm faded,
Now my strength is gone!)

Chirping, singing, whisper, birdling,
Secrets of the shrubs and bushes,
Murmurings of their shoots,
Have they news of mercies coming,
Have they hopes, as Lebanon's humming,
Soon to swing with fruits?

And the laborers, my brothers –
Have not these who sowed with weeping
Reaped with song and psalm?
Oh, that I had wings to fly with,
Fly unto the land where flourish
Almond tree and palm!

I myself, what shall I tell you,
Lovely bird, what stories hope you
From my lips to know?
In this far, cold land, no singing,
Only sighs and lamentations,
The poem consists of sixteen, four lined stanzas which have as their focus an imaginary dialogue between the poet and a "lovely" bird returning from "the wonders of the lands" to his melancholic, European "window". The poem itself consists of three major thematic units. In the first introductory unit, consisting of four stanzas, the narrator pleads with the bird to give him news of "the wonders of that distant Land from which you came," as he contrasts this ideal
imagined reality with the bitterness and misery of his own present exilic state. Indeed, the next seven stanzas of the poem, its central part, make up a series of rhetorical questions through which we are provided with images of the land's various landscapes and people. Thereafter, in the final five closing stanzas, the narrator returns to lament his own present-day torments in the ear of the bird, congratulating her on departing from him, and making her way to a brighter fate and future.189

What do al-Shami and al-Messiri make of Bialik's initial Zionist fantasy as it is portrayed in "To the Bird"? Quoting at length from the poem's opening, they begin by stressing Bialik's romantic, un-realistic relationship with the land. This dream-like, rootless relationship, they claim, might be the reason for Bialik's use of "recycled images" from the realm of nature, images that lack any social or historical dimensions. It is because of his un-realistic connection with his imagined object of desire, they claim, that his imagery of it carries a generalizing tone as he wonders, for example, about the state of "The hills and the hillocks". It is that same lack of authentic experience that pushes him to use images mediated through religious and literary Jewish texts, and it is here that the writers encourage their readers to compare Bialik's general imagery in a line taken from the poem: "And how is the Jordan and its clear waters", with Darwish's line taken from another poem ʿAn al-Umniyyat (On Wishes), a poem which portrays and rhetorically insists upon an extreme sense of specificity in its description: "The Nile will not flow into the Volga/ Nor the Congo or the Jordan into the Euphrates/ Each river has its source, its course, its life".190

This is the manner in which they sum up their comparison of the two:

189 For an elaborated analysis of the poem's composition, within its historical context see: Miron, Ha-Predah min ha-Ani he-ʿAni, 11-29.

190 Translated by Elmessiri, The Palestinian Wedding.
The general manner in which Bialik describes the nature reaches its peak in the greetings he sends to 'the highest of mountains or hills', meaning by it any mountain or any hill which by chance is higher than its peer. Indeed, Bialik the Zionist, cannot but send this dim general greeting because his tie to that land is a flimsy one, a tie bound to a flimsy idea, a relation with an ideal and not with a lived reality. What an abyss there is between this and between Darwish's poetry which delves into the details of his direct love to Palestine which he knows and has lived in.\textsuperscript{191}

We have thus far witnessed two types of comparative readings of intertextual relations between the two national poets, a 'normalizing', side by side comparison, emphasizing the notion of influence, and a reading which emphasizes the anti-colonial aspect of Darwish's relationship with Bialik. Although very different in their basic assumptions, both readings treat Darwish's role in the intertextual drama as basically passive. Notwithstanding my criticism of his normalizing reading, it is actually al-Rifa'i's comparison that assumes more of a connection between the poets, as he claims Bialik's linguistic and thematic influence over Darwish. Nevertheless, he remains unclear as to the conscious role Darwish is playing in 'being influenced' by Bialik, his agency so to speak. In his analysis, it remains unclear whether Darwish was aware of using some of the same linguistic constructions employed by Bialik, or was subconsciously influenced by him. Could there, though, be another form of intertextual relationship between the two, one that is more actively initiated by Darwish? After all, it is obvious by now that Darwish had, on the

\textsuperscript{191} Al-Shami and al-Messiri, "Al-Fikr", 85. My translation. The whole article is divided into five sections, each elaborating a theme within Bialik's Zionist rational. Here, I have only concentrated on the first notion, since it is the only one pertaining to the Darwish-Bialik comparison.
one hand a deep appreciation for Bialik's poetry, while on the other hand he was well aware of Bialik's problematic Zionist and nationalist shortcomings. One then may assume that this complex, somewhat ambivalent relationship might be reflected within Darwish's poetry.

"Risalah Min al-Manfa" (A Letter from Exile): Appropriating and Parodying Bialik's Bird

Before I proceed to present Darwish's reading or rewriting of Bialik's poem, an important remark is in order. I am by no way exploring here the original context in which Bialik's poem had been written, but rather focusing exclusively on the manner in which this poem had been received and read by Darwish (and by other Arab and Palestinian scholars). The historical reading of "El Ha-Tzipor", including its intricate relationship with the prevailing Hebrew poetic norms of Hibat-Zion, and Bialik's challenging of that model, have been thoroughly discussed. Obviously the political and social reality in which Bialik had written the poem bears little resemblance to the political and social conditions in which Darwish was forced to study the late Hebrew poet's poems. Therefore, the understanding of "El-Hatzipor" as a colonial phantasy by some Arabic scholars, as well as Darwish's ambivalent emotional attitude toward his poetry, are both part of Arab and Palestinian reception modes of nationalized Hebrew literature. In the case of Darwish, as I shall further explore, the ambivalence toward Bialik stems precisely from the difference between the original, exilic context of the poem's composition, and it's later nationalistic appropriation. On the one hand, the study of Bialik's poems had been part of the cultural and national Zionist oppression, within the process of the effort to reeducate the native. On the other hand, Darwish had been sensitive enough as to appreciate and realize Bialik's initial poetic depth.
We have observed thus far how Darwish, from a very young age, established a positive attitude toward Bialik, while at the same time distinguishing between two aspects of his poetry, a nationalistic and political aspect and a more personal and poetic aspect. We may only guess the extent to which Darwish internalized Bialik's poetry. What we can positively be sure of is that one of the poems Shoshana, Darwish's beloved Hebrew teacher must have taught the young Palestinian students in her classroom was "To the Bird". It is not only its easy, lightheaded rhythm, its extreme popularity, and the fact that it had been Bialik's first ever published poem that reassures us of this, but rather Darwish's testimony himself. In his 1973 autobiographical collection of essays, Yawmyyat al-Ḥuzn al-ʿAdi (Journal of Ordinary Grief) in an essay titled: The Homeland: Between Memory and History, Darwish, in a staged inner dialogue asks himself:

- What did you learn in school?
- Salute the bird returning from the distant land to my window in exile. O bird, tell me, how are my ancestors and my people?
- And the song that came before that?
- They erased it.
- What are the words of the song they erased?
- Salaam to you
  Land of my ancestors
  In you it's good to dwell
  And for you its good to sing.\(^{192}\)

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\(^{192}\) Darwish and Muhawi, *Journal of an Ordinary Grief* (page references do not appear, because the book's pages are unnumbered).
Thereafter, Darwish stresses the similarity between the two poems, being both love songs to the same land, though he adds: "The first is by a poet who lived in Russia, and the second is by a poet who lived in Palestine and never saw exile or heard of it." Darwish goes on to claim that it took only a short period of time for the first song to overcome the second song, while, "the youth who remained in the homeland were forbidden to sing the song of their poet. Their path to a future was hostage to their mastery of the songs of the Jewish poet who lived in Russia".

Might Darwish, being one of these indoctrinated youth, and attuned to poetical music as he was, have memorized the poem and its catchy phrases? Much later in his biography, in one of his letters to his fellow poet Samih al-Qasim, written in June 1986 in Paris, we find Darwish wondering "Does Haim Nahman Bialik express my state when he sings of the bird returning from the lands of the sun to his window overlooking the Russian ice?".

Bialik's bird, then, was repeatedly referenced by Darwish. It had become, for him, an exemplary case of the estranged manner in which Zionist indoctrination had been force-fed to Palestinians. However, as I wish to propose, Darwish's opposition to this Zionist Bialik-made bird was not reduced to his protest against the poem itself, for he was, at the same time, and as part of the new emerging Palestinian poetic subjectivity (high-lighted in the first chapter), constructing his own poetic Palestinian bird. Noticeably, birds appear as titles in two of his earlier collections. His first, raw collection of poems composed at the age of nineteen and later deemed by him

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193 Darwish and Muhawi, Journal of an Ordinary Grief.
194 Darwish and Muhawi, Journal of an Ordinary Grief.
195 Darwish and al-Qasim, al-Rasa’il, 41, my translation.
unworthy of a place in his collected work was titled 'Asafir bila Ajnihah (Wingless Birds), while
his eighth collection, published in 1970 is titled: Al-'Asafir Tamut fi al-Jalil (The Birds are
Dying in the Galilee).196

We may already sense, then, the difference between Bialik's and Darwish's bird.197 While
Bialik's bird is a fairytale kind of bird, magical, optimistic and vivid, bringing news from a "land
of wondrous distance", Darwish's birds are of a grave, realistic kind. They seem to be 'post-
traumatic' birds: his earliest birds deformed, 'wingless', while the later, 1970's birds are simply
dying. These birds, seen traditionally as symbols of freedom and song, are transformed into
forceful metaphors meant to describe both personal and national conditions of deformation.
Again, as with his ironic take on Whitman's optimistic expressive celebrative nationalism, here
too, Darwish's birds are nothing like Bialik's romantic and idealistic returning bird.

Yet comparing Darwish's different use of birds in relation to Bialik's doesn't take us very far
from the somewhat simplistic comparative reading, similar to the one performed by al-Shami and
al-Messiri. Moreover, the use of birds as a metaphoric image is part of the conventional poetic
vocabulary of Romanticism, and isn't, therefore, particularly unique or especially telling. It is
within the fourth section of the poem "Risalah min al-Manfa" (a Letter from Exile) that Darwish
goes beyond this general "bird substitution", and stages a full-scale parodic appropriation of
Bialik's canonical poem. The poem itself is located toward the middle of the Olive Leaves

196 Darwish, 'Asafir bala Ajnihah.
———. Al-'Asafir Tamutu fi al-Jalil.
197 Following the different appearances of birds within Darwish's corpus and their transfigurations might be an extremely fruitful project.
collection, and is made up of five sections. It is framed as a letter from the exiled protagonist to his family back in the homeland. My comparative close reading of the two poems will concentrate mainly on that fourth section of Darwish's poem. Even so, I provide here the full Arabic version of the poem, in parallel with its English translation, since the understanding of the first three sections is vital to the comprehension of the fourth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Letter From Exile</th>
<th>رسالة من المنفى</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greetings ... And a kiss for your cheeks! I have nothing else to add Where should I begin? Or end? Time's wheel turns endlessly And all I have in my exile Is a stale loaf of bread, longing And a notebook which carries Some of the things I couldn't carry – I spit onto its pages The hatred I couldn't conceal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تحية ... وقبلة ليس عندي ما أقول بعد من أين أبتدي؟ ... و أين أنتهي؟ و دورة الزمان دون حد وكل ما في غريتي زوادة، فيها رغيف يابس، ووجد ودفتر يحمل عنى بعض ما حملت بصفت في صفحاته ما ضاق بي من حقد</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I say to the radio: Tell her I'm fine! I say to the swallow: When you migrate, little bird</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أقول للمذياع ... قل لها أنا بخير أقول للعصفور When you migrate, little bird</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


Don't forget me. Remember to say:
He's fine!
I'm fine!
There's still vision in my eyes
There's still a moon in the skies
My old overcoat is still alright
The sleeves are torn
But I mended them, and it's fine!
I've become a man of twenty
Imagine me, Mother, becoming twenty
Like other men
I face life
I haul my burdens
And I work
At a restaurant ... I wash dishes
And brew coffee for customers
And glue smiles on my sad face
To keep them happy.

I'm fine!
I've turned twenty
I've become a man, Mother
I smoke and lean against walls
And flirt with girls
I tell my friends:
"Brothers! How sweet women are!
Imagine how bitter life would be
Without them! How bitter it would be!"
One of them turns to me and asks:
"Do you have any bread?
I'm hungry! Do you have any bread?"
Brothers! What good is man
If he goes to bed hungry every night?
I'm fine!
I'm fine!
I have dark bread
And a small basket of green thyme.

I heard on the radio
"Letters from Home"
Everyone said: I'm fine
No one is sad!
How is father?
Is he still fond of God
Children, the land, and olive trees?
How are my brothers?
Do they all have jobs?
My father once said:
"They shall all become professors"
Yet no one in my village today
Can decipher a single word in my letter
And how is our sister?
Has she blossomed? Has she had callers?
And how is my grandmother?
Does she still sit by the doorstep
And pray for us
Wishing us prosperity, youth and godliness?
And how is our house
Its sunny threshold, its open yard
And its high doors?

I heard on the radio
"Letters from Home"
Greetings from one exile to another
They said they were all fine.
But anxiety oppresses me
Having heard no news of you
Not even sad ones!
Not even bad ones!

Mother!
Night is a hungry wolf
Chasing the exile wherever he goes
Its ghosts haunt the horizon
And the willow grove
Continues to embrace the winds.
What have we done, Mother
To die twice –
Once in life
And once in death?

Do you know what fills me with tears?
Should I suddenly fall sick
And should sickness fell my body
Would evening remember
The refugee who died here
And was buried without a shroud?

Willow tree!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Will you remember
That what they throw in your sad shade
Like a dead lump, is the body of a man?
Will you remember I'm a man?
And protect my corpse from ravenous crows? |
| أن الذي رموه تحت ظلك الحزين
كأي شيء ميت - إنسان؟
هل تذكرين أنني إنسان
و تحظين جثثي من سطوه الغربان؟ |

We may observe that from its very start, the basic poetic geography set in motion runs parallel to that of Bialik's poem. In both poems the speaker is in exile, performing a speech act toward the ones that are in the homeland. Darwish himself, at this stage, is still far from becoming "Exile's Poet", and it is only in 1970 that he will depart from Palestine. Yet the poem assumes the persona of an exiled character. The speaker is portrayed as a young man that just reached his twentieth birthday. His general tone varies, shifting between a pragmatic optimism and the agonies of exilic fortunes. Thus he begins with a kind of general semi-philosophic lamentation:

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Where should I begin? Or end?
Time's wheel turns endlessly
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This lamentation narrows its scope as it focuses thereafter around the exilic state of affairs, which is presented as a set of negations, things that are not fulfilled. The speaker does not know where to begin, since nothing he will say "today or after tomorrow" will end neither with a "Cuddle / Or the touch of the hand", nor bring the stranger (i.e: the exiled) back home, nor make

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200 In Bialik's case the speaker's address to the homeland is negotiated through a set of rhetorical questions to the mediating, mute bird.

201 The identity of this immigrated protagonist remains anonymous. Historically, there were of course many Palestinians that fled the country during the 1960's in search of employment and a better future. For a brief discussion of the social context of the poem see: 'Alian, *Al-Janib al-Ijtima'a' i fi al-Shi' r al-Filastini*, 466-467.

202 In the following I usually follow Bennani's translation of the poem, however, in places where I thought Bennani was off the mark I inserted my own translation.
rain come down. Most importantly and relevant to our discussion, the power of his words cannot fledge: "The wing of a lost bird / A fallen bird."

This first appearance of an actual bird within the poem (and the next one as we shall immediately see) is a foreshadowing of what is to come. It is a first, preliminary hint, a flirtation, setting the stage for the full-scale confrontation with Bialik's poem. The speaker, then, compares himself to a featherless, wing-broken, lost bird. Not only is this bird nothing like Bialik's jolly, friendly bird, but it is furthermore a personification of the speaker's gloomy condition. There cannot be a "fairytale" bird, since reality is harsh, and this exiled bird is carrying with it the true traumatic marks of its flight from its own homeland.

This first appearance of a broken winged bird is immediately substituted in the opening of the following section with the bird as a carrier of messages, almost identical in its function to Bialik's bird:

I say to the radio: Tell her I'm fine!
I say to the swallow:
If you run into her, oh bird

Don't forget me. Remember to say:
He's fine!

In order to understand this passage, we must first decipher the context in which the term: midhaya' (literally: radio) is used here. As the poet and Palestinian literary critic Firas Haj Muhammad tells us, Darwish is referencing a common practice used by Palestinians in the post
Nakba era in order to communicate. Following the Nakba the once united Palestinian population had found itself in a scattered, fragmented state. Human communication between Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and their brothers and sisters living in what had become officially the state of Israel, as well as between the many Palestinians, that have fled the country became nearly impossible. Arab radio shows attempted to fill that gap by sending messages to and from lost relatives and friends. Haj mentions that amongst these shows were "Messages of Longing" (Rasa’il Shawq) and another show bearing the interesting name, "Keep Me Posted, Oh, Bird" (Khabirni Ya Tayr).

So, returning to the poem, the speaker here is simultaneously addressing the radio show and the 'bird' (whether Darwish's speaker is referencing the above-mentioned radio show, or a real bird remains ambiguous), so that both signifiers, 'bird' and 'radio', can be seen as synonymous in their function. Both are intended to be carriers of news from the lonely, young, exiled speaker to his mother (later on, the poem reveals the identity of the addressee, 'her', to be the speaker's mother). The parallel between Bialik's bird – which carries imaginary news from the "land of the sun" to the poet's European gloomy window, and between Darwish's "radio", that is used to carry real news to that very same land – is therefore achieved in this section of the poem.

Appropriating "To the Bird": Rhetorical Patterns Meter and Rhyme

This fourth section then contains a full appropriation of Bialik's. In the table below I have given both the Hebrew and Arabic source texts of both poems, setting up relating segments one against

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203 Haj, *Fi Dhikra, Mahmoud Darwish.*

204 Haj, *Fi Dhikra,* ?. 
the other. This is followed by another table in which their corresponding translations into English are given. While Darwish’s full version of the fourth section of the poem appears, I have selected relevant passages from Bialik’s longer poem, as to emphasize the similarities which I would like to discuss hereafter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bialik- Hebrew Source- El Ha-Tzipor&lt;sup&gt;205&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Darwish-Arabic Source- Risalah Min al-Manfaa&lt;sup&gt;206&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>שלום רב שובהו צפרה נשתקה,</td>
<td>سمعت في المذياع</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מאורצות חוה אל-חלоор</td>
<td>تحية المشردين للمشردين</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אל כללה 면 ציר되면 פֶסֶל כללה</td>
<td>قال الجميع: كلنا بخير</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בחלקה בעובדה עוניה.</td>
<td>لا أحد حزين.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ב干部职工 בנשטים כללות
- גבעת אל קֶרֶם, א-גרם
- הנקימין משצרת משבריר.
- חלון טוש, טברם?

ואחרי הצלבים, הגרים במנעה

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>פكيف حال والدي؟</td>
<td>الم يزل كعهد، يجب ذكر الله</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>والأبناء..والتراب..والزيتون؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>وكيف حال אחותי؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>هل أصبحوا موظفين؟</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>205</sup> Bialik, Kol Shirei, 9-11.
<sup>206</sup> Darwish, Diwan, 36-38.
הֲקָצְרוּ בְרִנָּה הָׁעֹּמֶר?

מִי יִתֶן לִי אֵבֶר וְעַפְתִי אֶל אֶרֶץ בָּה יָׁנֵץ הַשָׁקֵד, הַתֹּמֶר!

הֲיֵרֵד כִפְנִינִים הַטַל עַל הַר חֶרְמוֹן, אם יֵרֵד וְיִפֹּל כִדְמָׁעוֹת?

וּמַה שְלוֹם הַיַרְדֵן וּמֵימָיו הַבְהִירִים?

שְלוֹם כָּל הֶהָרִים, הַגְבָעֹת?

אַחַר פֹּקְדְנֵהֶם תְּשִלֶּל עַל Тֶרֶם, או נָרַד וּפָלֵק פֹּקְדְנֵהֶם?

וֹטְדוֹכְנֵהוּ הַנִיָּרִים הַשָּׁוָא הַגְבָעֹת?

שָלוֹם כֶל-הַנִיָּרִים, הַגְבָעֹת?

 سمحت يوحا والذي يقول:

سيصبحون كلهم معلمين...

 سمحت يقول:

(أجوع حتى اشترى لهم كتاب)

لا أحد في قريتي يفك حرفًا في خطاب...

وكيف حال أختنا

هل كبرت، وجاها خطاب؟

وكيف حال جنتي

الم تزل كعدها تقعد عند الباب؟

تدعو لنا...

بالخير، والشباب، والثواب...

وكيف حال بيتنا

والعنبة والملساء، والوجاها، والأبواب؟

 سمحت في المذياع

رسائل المشردين، للمشردين
Greetings! Peace to you, returning
Lovely bird, unto my window,
From a warmer clime!
How my soul for songs was yearning
When my dwelling you deserted
In the winter-time!

I heard on the radio
"Letters from Home"
Everyone said: I'm fine
No one is sad!

207 Bialik, "To the Bird", 3-8.
Tell me, are the Vale of Sharon
And the Hill of Incense flowing
Still with nard and myrrh?
Does the oldest of the forests
Wake from sleep? Is ancient,
slumbering Lebanon astir?

How is father?
Is he still fond of God
Children, the land, and olive trees?

And the laborers, my brothers –
Have not these who sowed with weeping
Reaped with song and psalm?
Oh, that I had wings to fly with,
Fly unto the land where flourish
Almond tree and palm!

How are my brothers?
Do they all have jobs?
My father once said:
"They shall all become professors"
Yet no one in my village today
Can decipher a single word in my letter

And how is our sister?
Has she blossomed? Has she had callers?
And how is my grandmother?
Does she still sit by the doorstep
And pray for us
Wishing us prosperity, youth and godliness?
How the hills and how the hillocks
And the mountains all?
I myself, what shall I tell you,
Lovely bird, what stories hope you
From my lips to know?
In this far, cold land, no singing,
Only sighs and lamentations,
Only groans and woe.

And how is our house
Its sunny threshold, its open yard
And its high doors?
I heard on the radio
"Letters from Home"
Greetings from one exile to another
They said they were all fine.
But anxiety oppresses me
Having heard no news of you
Not even sad ones!
Not even bad ones!

Reading the parallel versions of the two poems, we realize that the substitution of the ideal, unrealistic bird in Bialik's poem for the historical, actual "radio" which carried news from and to the homeland was merely preparing us for Darwish's re-rendering of some of the major features relating to the form, rhyme and rhetoric style in "To the Bird".
The most convincing resemblance, as the table above indicates, is the manner in which a set of similar rhetorical questions are put forward by the speakers in both poems. Both wish to know whether the objects and people they are familiar with have changed or remained as they remember them to be. Both poems present us with a sequence of questions, connecting to each other through the connective word "and", and finally both present their question with a similar simple formula of: "How are you?". In Bialik's case he is concerned mostly with general, unanimated landscapes which include: The valley of the Sharon, the hill of frankincense, the ancient forest, the Lebanon, the Jordan river, and his fellow 'brothers', while Darwish's speaker wonders about the most intimate, concrete 'history': his father, his brother, his sister, his grandmother and the specifics of his house. In a similar manner the proposed answers to both speaker's rhetorical questions relate to the objects' or person's changeability or stability. And again for Bialik, the expected response has to do with the abstract qualities of what he considers mythical symbolic landscapes: i.e.: "Does dew drop down like pearls on the Hermon mountain, and if it drops does it fall like tears?", whereas Darwish is concerned with the very intimate, detailed family occurrences, i.e.: "And how are my brothers? Do they all have jobs? My father once said:' They will all become professors".

So, on the level of the rhetoric construction we observe a striking similarity. This similarity is complemented by a correspondence pertaining to both rhyme and rhythm, a resemblance which is part of Darwish's appropriation of Bialik's poem. Bialik's rhyming is extremely systematic throughout the poem, keeping a pattern of a varied end rhymes between the second and fourth
line in each of the sixteen stanzas. In Darwish's case, on the other hand, though rhyme is unsystematic, it is still dominant throughout the fourth section. Thus, for example, the fourteen lines following the line pertaining to the speaker's father "I heard him say" are rhymed alternately by the ending sound "āb". In addition to the combination of a dominant end rhyme and the formative aspect of rhetorical questions, a similar rhythmical aspect overrides both poems. Again we observe a difference between Bialik's more conservative meticulous use of meter, and Darwish's more sporadic, freely expressive mode of metering. Still, notwithstanding these differences both poets' use of extremely short rhymed lines creates a similar musical impression.

In conclusion, the overall impression one gets when reading this fourth section from "A Letter From Exile", is that it can be read as a re-rendering of Bialik's canonic poem "To the Bird". Darwish's early exposure to Bialik's poems, as part of the indoctrinated ideology imposed upon him in the Zionist school system had made both the content and music of the poem more than familiar to him. His ambivalent stance toward Bialik's poetry was shaped during his high school

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209 According to Miron (Ha-Predah, 11-13), Bialik had spent over two years composing the poem, perfecting both its meter and rhyme.

210 It is interesting to observe the possible symbolic meaning of the specific expressive rhyme "āb" (meaning "father" in both Arabic and Hebrew) as it reoccurs in these lines.

211 The similarity of these formative, musical attributes (namely rhythm and rhyme) may only be observed, of course, in the source languages, since none are totally kept in their English rendering.

212 Miron, (Ha-Predah, 11-29) is again of use to us here, as he observes Bialik's careful crafting of the poem's meter, using the amphibrach metrical foot.

213 Unlike most of his Palestinian predecessors, Darwish, in a spirit more in sync with the modern shift taking place within Arabic poetry, had been gradually freeing himself from the restrictive demands of meter and rhyme, see: Furani, Silencing, 113. Concerning the question of rhyme, see: Musawi, Trajectories, 218-236. Musawi and others show, modern Arabic poetry adopted T.S Elliot's concepts of subjective expressive music embodying the poem.
years, aided by the mediation of his beloved Jewish Israeli literature teacher, Shoshana. It was Shoshana's attitude that enabled him to simultaneously appreciate Bialik's poetic talent, while remaining critical of ideological appropriation of his poetry by the Zionist establishment. It is this ambivalent attitude that shaped his appropriation of "To the Bird" and its parodying within "A Letter from Exile".

The reproduction of the original rhetorical structure and the similar feel of rhythm and rhyme may be seen as a tribute to the poetic elements prevailing in Bialik's early poetics. While keeping the form, the change of content: the substitutions of the idealistic bird for the realistic radio, of the fantastic, mythical, mediated landscapes for real family members, of the abstract for the concrete, all of these empty, parody and appropriate Bialik's early fantasy by presenting instead a Palestinian 'updated', authentic version of what the 'real' relationship between exile and homeland looks and sounds like.

Our reading of Darwish's parodic adaptation of Bialik's "To the Bird" in his "Letter from Exile", exceeds both al-Rifa‘i's normalizing reading, and Al-Shami's and al-Messiri's anti-colonial interpretation of their relationship. Rather, I have been advocating here for a third option; a literary space, in which a complex intertextuality, that takes into account Darwish's intimate knowledge of Bialik, both as a master poet and as a national icon come into light. In a sense, Darwish's playfulness and mastery of Bialik's 'inter-text' is almost of a post-modern sensibility, but it is the historical moment of Palestinian disposition that always binds it to a strong post-colonial desire. Both Hutcheon's and Appiah's distinction of the post-colonial subject's need to
assert his national subjectivity hold true here. At any rate, Darwish's full scale appropriation and parody of Bialik's poem stand as a striking example of Bhabha's definition of the post-colonial Subject (mentioned earlier) where there is: "no recognition of master and slave… there is only the matter of the enslaved master, the un-mastered slave".

The ongoing discourse, be it academic or popular, revolving around Darwish's and Bialik's relationship echoes Darwish's early appeal to modern Arabic critics: "save us from this harsh love" (discussed in length in chapter 1). Treating Darwish's early Resistance Poetry exclusively as anti-Zionist poetry blinded critics to the proliferation of intertextual references and dialogues which take place within the Olive Leaves collection. This reductionist point of view failed to recognize Darwish's early engagement and place within the broader anti-colonial and dialogical moment with the West taking place during the 1950-60's in modern Arabic poetry. Nowhere is this ignorance more evident than in the case of T.S Eliot's influential presence within the new modern poetic Arab sensibilities of those years. For while an abundance of scholarship describing Eliot's engagement with modern Arabic poets exists, there is a surprising silence in relation to his presence within Darwish's early writings. The section that follows will somewhat make up for this lacuna, as it brings to the forefront Darwish's early dialogue with T.S Elliot within the Olive Leaves collection.

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214 Hutcheon, Politics of Postmodernism, 173-176; Appiah, "Representations and Realism".
215 Bhabha, Location, 131.
216 Kafka, Lorca, and The Song of Songs are some of the other Western intertextual presences within the Olive Leaves collection.
Not Quite a (waste)-Land: Darwish's Early Poetic Encounter with T.S Eliot

A Belated Scholarship

As briefly mentioned, the early link between Darwish and Elliot has been overlooked by Darwish scholarship. Generally, Darwish scholarship tended, as in other instances, to focus its attention mainly on his later work, neglecting to a large extent his earlier publications. Indeed, the case of his relationship with Eliot is no different. It is only in 2007 that a first book on the title was published by Muhammad Shahin.217 The author devotes the third chapter to an extensive comparative reading of Elliot's "The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and Darwish's philosophical lyrical reflection upon death, *Jidariyya* (Mural).218 Another later, more modest attempt to compare "The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock" with a Darwish poem was introduced by Jaradat and Zeidanin.219 Their structural analysis of Elliot's poem and of Darwish's poem "A Truce with the Mongols in the Forest of Oak" suggested that the two are narrated using similar fragmented, ironic and symbolic language.220

217 Shahin, *T.S Iliyut Wa-Atharuhu fi al-Shi’r al-‘Arabi*.

218 Darwish, *Jidariah*. The poem is an existential poetic account, following Darwish's near-death experience at the hospital.


Even this belated exploration of Darwish's relationship with Eliot, however, overlooks the concurrent historical moment, for Darwish's early dialogue with Eliot had been an integral part of the general, ambivalent modern Arabic anti-colonial mode of writing. In presenting us the accomplished work of an already famous Darwish, side by side with Eliot's poetics, we are afforded an uncomplicated version of their encounter. Somewhat similar to the two simplistic, reductive readings of the Darwish- Bialik encounter discussed earlier (the normalizing reading, and the anti-colonial reading), we are again offered a simplistic version of Darwish's encounter with Eliot. We might view these belated readings of their relationship as 'normalizing' as well, for they too, dismisses the fundamental differences of their cultural/historical positioning, as well as the power relationship between Western modernism's exemplary poet, and the voice of the colonized young Palestinian poet. Indeed, it is no coincidence that it is Darwish's most philosophical and in some ways, apolitical work, Jidariah (Mural), that was chosen to be the object of comparison, as if two decontextualized masterpieces are laid down side by side.

**Elliot's Influence upon Modern Arabic Poetry**

If Darwish scholars have been ignoring Darwish's early encounter with Eliot, this is by no means the case with scholarship dealing with the early encounters of other modern Arabic poets with Eliot's work. Indeed, as we shall further elaborate, both Arab and Western scholars have devoted many works to examining Eliot's influence upon the free-verse poetry group. By according Palestinian poetry a privileged status as "Resistance Poetry", however, modern Arabic criticism marked it as being *other* in relation to "mainstream" modern Arabic literatures. It is this *otherness*, so sharply critiqued by Darwish, this reduction of Palestinian poetry to a fetishized, indeed ahistorical object of resistance, that might account for the lack of attention given to Darwish's early encounter with Eliot.
Take for example al-Musawi's 2002 article: "Engaging Tradition in Modern Arab Poetics".\textsuperscript{221}

One of his central claims in the article is that:

In the face of many challenges after the Second World War, poets felt the need for a poetics of regeneration, a mythical method that could superimpose a totalizing vision on a seemingly dying land and civilization. T. S. Eliot's writings on tradition and his use of myth drew attention to pre-Islamic mythology, especially in its Babylonian and Phoenician manifestations.\textsuperscript{222}

Any mention of Palestinian literary production in the years he discusses is totally absent. Moreover, even the mere signifier ‘Palestine' appears only twice in the article, the country's loss mentioned as part of the post-traumatic atmosphere prevailing among non-Palestinian Arab poets. While the works of poets such as al-Bayyati, al-Sabur and Adonis are discussed in detail, Darwish's name is absent. In short, Darwish's early participation in the poetic dialogue with Eliot – framed by scholars in the context of a broader poetics of anti-colonialism – is entirely overlooked. Furthermore, scholarship seems to be especially focused on the Iraqi, or Baghdadi moment of this encounter, and within that, extremely preoccupied with comparing al-Sayyab and Eliot. Thus in 1998 De Young thoroughly examined al-Sayyab's relationship with Eliot.\textsuperscript{223} His publication was followed a year later by another comparative analysis of the two poets by

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{221}Musawi, Muhsin, J., "Engaging Tradition in Modern Arab Poetics", 172-210.

\textsuperscript{222}Musawi, Muhsin, J., "Engaging", 172.

\textsuperscript{223}De Young, Placing, especially 65-97.
\end{flushleft}
Khadim.224 Yet another comparison of al-Sayyab and Eliot belongs to Samarrai who juxtaposes al-Ṣayyab’s "Hymn of the Rain" with the "Waste Land".225

In the section that follows I provide a close reading of two poems from the Olive Leaves collection, in order to explore how the early encounter between Elliot and the young Darwish was reflected in his early collection. It is my contention that Darwish was well aware of Eliot's poetics, and that the poems convey a subversive reading of them. In a sense, Darwish's attitude toward Eliot carries some affinity to that of al-Sayyab, in that both poets adopt some of Eliot's poetic principles, while challenging and critiquing others. I further suggest that Darwish's early engagement with Eliot, and especially with the "Waste Land" must be read as an integral part of the general modern and anti-colonial mode of writing which was emerging throughout the Arab world from the early 1950's on. It is only through the realization of the double context, which simultaneously considers the national Palestinian post-traumatic struggle for liberation, and the general awaking of Arab anti-colonial writing, that Darwish's early encounter with Eliot may be fully grasped.

224 Khadim, "Rewriting The 'Waste Land'", 128-70.
Reconsidering Eliot's Dialogical Form: "?" and "Grief and Wrath" ("al-Huzn wal-Ghadab")

In his open Yale course on Eliot's poetry, Langdon Hammer suggests that the form of a dialogical poem (that is, a poem in which the speaker is turning to another person present in the poem) exemplified in the "Waste Land" and in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" replaces the earlier presence of God within modernist poetry, and is indicative of a shattered, post-war secularity in which God has lost his place as a unifying principle. According to Hammer, the relationship with the other appears to function therefore, as a libidinal substitution for the relationship with the divine.226

Similarly, many of the Olive Leaves poems have a dialogical character, in which the speaker holds a conversation with others. These others vary in identity, but generally tend to be either a father figure such as in the case of "Marthiyah" (Elegy), a woman such as in "Nashid Ma" (A Hymn) and "Al-Mawt fi al-Ghabah" (Death in the Forest), a male friend such as in "Walaa" (loyalty), and "al-Huzn wal-Ghadab" (the Grief and the Wrath), or the people as a collective in poems such as "Amal" (Hope) or "Risalah min al-Manfa" (A Letter from Exile). To some extent, Darwish's dialogues too, appear to be held within a world devoid any divine presence, thus one of the collection's poems begins: "Sleep, for the Eye of God Ignores us …" ("Death in the Forest"). But it is exactly this disappearance of God in face of the ongoing calamity that separates Elliot's dialogical form from that of Darwish's. While Darwish's conversations are held against a background of a post-traumatic, dislocated, burnt landscape of the motherland, they aim at constructing meaning anew, after it (meaning, history, God, tradition etc…) has been violently

226 Hammer, "Modern Poetry (ENGL 310) Yale University Course on T.S Elliot's Poetry".
disrupted by colonial violence. So, if Darwish's dialogical poem seeks to amend the shattered pieces, to make sense and reinvent a unity, Eliot's dialogical mode signifies the utter failure to communicate and make sense in godless, post WW1 world. Eliot's dialogue is almost a non-dialogue, a testimony to the lack of coherence within a world that has lost its meaning.

Two such dialogical poems will be at the center of my analysis, for in both, I contend, Darwish is recasting images from Eliot's poetic world. By underlining Eliot's motifs, themes, and images, I will suggest that Darwish is doubly gesturing toward Eliot, paying tribute to his legacy, while subverting his basic concept of a 'universal', but in fact Western crisis of meaning. Darwish, I argue, charges some of Eliot's core images with a prophetic voice, one that replaces Eliot's detached and ironic tone. This change in tone further emphasizes the difference in the ethical stands of both poets. While Eliot's "Waste Land" resonates with ambiguity, or at least understatement, Darwish unequivocally calls for justice and for a restoration of a lost, shattered past. As Eliot's foundational crisis is positioned in the heart of a historical Western civilization reaching a meaningless state, one might define Darwish's crisis as the crisis of the native facing the disruption of his identity by colonial trauma.
Not Quite Buried: Darwish’s Twisted Resurrection of Colonial Justice in "?"

The first poem I intend discussing is titled: "?". Here is the full Arabic text of the poem, paralleled by my own English translation:

<table>
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| Your eyes, oh my old friend, oh my adolescent friend  
Your eyes - two beggars in the night of suffocating corners  
Hope doesn't laugh within them, and lightning doesn't sleep  
Nothing is left for us...but flooding tears  
Say: when will you laugh once, hypocritical as your laughter may be?  
Your two palms my friend, two hungry wolves  
Sucking the remains of our blood, and after us, the flood  
If you once get hungry, do not leave the body behind  
And if afterwards you get fed-up, you have with you the worms  
Truly we were born mistakenly...in the carelessness of time  
And you my old friend...my adolescent friend  
Be upon our remnants, as fragrant lilies.  
The forest, oh my friend, lays the secrets to rest  
Around us the trees don't smuggle any news  
And the sun at our door is light-dimmed  
Ratting, but she doesn't pass the walls  
Indeed the life behind us is strange and double-faced  
So build upon our bones a high rising tower.  
I hear my friend, what the enemies are shouting  
I hear them from a crack in tent of the sky:  "Oh, woe to him whose' lung has breathed the air  
From a stolen lung!...  

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227 My translation.
228 Darwish, *Diwan*, 42-3. Since the poem is yet to have been translated into English nor Hebrew, I provide my own unprofessional translation.
Oh, woe to him whose’ drink is blood! 
And to him who built a garden…whose soil is of fragmented bodies 
Woe to him from its poisonous flower."

Ambiguity is suggested from the very beginning by the very title, a question mark (the only untitled poem in the collection). This ambiguity is reinforced in the first stanza with the riddlelike description of the female addressee as being both ‘ajuz (old) and murahaqah (adolescent). In the next line, the ageless addressee’s eyes are personified and presented to the readers as: "Two beggars in the night the suffocated corners of the night". This opening, no doubt, creates a sense that we are within the world of Eliot's poetics where meaning is obscured, and fleeting body organs appear upon a post-traumatic background. Indeed, the description of the eyes not only resonates with Eliot's 'pearled eyes' from the "Waste Land" ('those are pearls that were his eyes'), but the fact that they are likened to two beggars in a corner further more locates us within an urban space, not unlike Eliot's urban space in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".229

229 Eliot, The Waste Land, Prufrock, and Other Poems. Eliot's 'pearled eyes' is a quotation from Sheaksper's play the The Tempest, it is uttered by the spirit Ariel, servant to Prospero, as she tells Ferdinand, the prince of Naples of his father's death in a shipwreck. As in Prufrock, we have here a doubling, a so to speak ‘you and I’: the eyes are two beggars that are walking the streets. In the second poem which I will examine, the primal scene of the poem is exactly like Prufrock’s, in which the speaker and his addressee are strolling together down the city's streets.
The sense of Eliot's philosophical, extremely abstract and ambiguous atmosphere is cut short by a countering movement in the poem, a movement toward a concrete, specific meaning. We see this even with the eyes' description, for while Eliot leaves the reference to the dead sailor's eyes as abstract as possible, Darwish elaborates the image, adding that "hope does not laugh in them", while on the other hand "lightening never sleeps" within them as well, that is, they are pessimistic while simultaneously agitated, unsettled and anxious. The sense that a specific, concrete situation is presented in the poem is further enhanced by the speaker's final question to his mystery female friend at the end of the stanza: "when will you laugh once, hypocritical as your laughter may be?". It is precisely the mixture of abstract imagery coupled with a specific emotional moment that creates within the reader a sense of anxiety, as the desire to discover the identity of the speaker's feminine friend is reinforced.

Re-Writing the Final Stanza of the "Burial of the Dead"

Fragmented body imagery prevails through the second stanza as well, as the speaker zooms in, this time, on the addressee's palms. First, there is the anaphoric plea to the feminine friend: "Oh, friend" (ya sadigati), followed by an image which likens her the two palms to "two hungry wolves" which, "suck our blood". The conundrum and contradiction increase, for now we are faced with the fact that this female 'friend' is sucking the collective blood of what may be seen as the speaker's people. It is with the next two lines of the stanza that one may finally deduce that the addressee is none other than the land itself:

If you once get hungry, do not leave the body behind
And if afterwards you get fed-up, you have with you the worms
Now, the opening description falls into place: Land is at once old and adolescent, full of history, yet ever-altering in its ability to absorb and change— it never reaches a finite state. It is land that gives, for the speaker, no sign of hope, yet her eyes never rest, relentlessly transmitting a demand, soaking up the blood of the speaker and his people.

As we continue reading the stanza, we realize that what we are actually confronted with is a take-off on a rather famous scene of Eliot's. It is a reframing and a re-articulation of Eliot's speaker's brief, one-sided conversation with his old war mate Stetson, at the end of the first section of the "Waste Land": "The Burial of the Dead." Darwish collectively revisits Stetson's planted corpse with its alluded future sprouting, as he suggests a similar (yet different) horrific re-fertilization of the fragments of bodies, by the old-adolescent friend of the speaker, 'land'. Darwish's speaker is actually elaborating the process of an after-death revival. An image of a perverse resurrection culminates with the speaker's plea to the land, in the closing of the stanza to "Stand over our fragments like fragrant lilies". By re-claiming the image within a specific Palestinian and Arabic anti-colonial moment, Darwish is re-contextualizing Eliot's powerful poetic figure. Although it is undoubtedly Palestine that is the immediate focus for Darwish here, the general

230 Here is the full citation from Eliot's poem:

There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Steston!,
You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again

231 We observe here the reappearance of the black burnt lilies rom the first poem, as they are transformed into an attribute of nature, so it is as if the spirit of the dead Palestinians are re-inscribed into the landscape.
nature of the imagery suggests universality. Darwish is simultaneously referring to 'any land' on the face of earth since any land is indeed an eternal witness to the deeds of humans, containing within its old-adolescent being the hidden sighs and bloods of its dispossessed.\textsuperscript{232}

Darwish's presentation of colonial violence here is part of his general stance regarding poetry's role as resistance, and as a liberating artistic force, and it is on this focal point that Darwish and Eliot's paths part. It is worthwhile mentioning that al-Ṣayyab had a similar parting of paths from Eliot. As De-Young informs us, what hindered al-Ṣayyab from fully aligning himself with Eliot's poetics was what he viewed to be the descriptive nature of Eliot's project. For him, Eliot was describing a given social, political and spiritual decadent state without offering any real solution or resistance. For al-Ṣayyab this meant that to fully go along with Eliot's aesthetics and embrace it, would also entail an acceptance of a nihilist Western modernism, and that in turn, would suggest joining and cooperating, so to speak, with the "darkness of the West".\textsuperscript{233}

Something of a similar sort, I believe, is operating within Darwish's initial dialogue with Eliot's poetics. Darwish (even the young Darwish) is already articulating a basic ethical stand in which history is portrayed as the meaningful process of cultural possession and dispossession played by humans on this earth. As Abbas tells us, at the heart of his poetics, is the compulsion to endlessly re-enact the trauma of loss, in an effort to constantly reclaim a specific lost justice, a longing for a

\textsuperscript{232} Dispossession as a universal theme is developed later on by Darwish in several poems. See for example Darwish's fascination with the case of native-Americans expressed in poems such as "The Red Indian's Penultimate Speech to the White Man" from the collection: \textit{Ahad ʿAshar Kaukaban [Eleven Planets]}.

\textsuperscript{233} De Young, \textit{Placing}, 70-72.
lost unity. The world therefore had not, as it would seem to have in Eliot's case, reached a stage, where it is inherently devoid of meaning. Rather, it is trauma (colonial, personal) that shatters meaning, destabilizing cultural, historical and spiritual continuity. Poetry is not the reflection of a fundamentally meaningless, dry, decadent state of being; rather, its role is to restore and revive lost worlds of meaning in face of colonial violence.

While both al-Ṣayyab and Darwish have a similar quarrel with Eliot, the difference between them is that Darwish's encounter with Eliot does not carry the same dramatic magnitude, as al-Ṣayyab's encounter did. Darwish, it seems, was never caught too deeply in Eliot's shadow. On the other hand, Eliot's presence within the Olive Leaves poem is evident both as a poetic reference which enriches the text (in this sense both the "Waste Land" and "Prufrock" function in the poems I am discussing as inter-texts), and within the highly important subverted re-birth imagery which is crucial for Darwish. So, while an influence of some sort is taking place, it is very important to observe how Darwish is well aware of it, and how he sets out to establish a subtle hierarchy between himself and Eliot (as we shall see in the discussion of the second poem).

The essential difference between Eliot's and Darwish's concepts of resurrection is exemplified in the closing of our poem, with the further un-folding of the 'blossoming corpse' image.

234 Abbas, Ittijahat, 151-152.

235 This is by no means a critique of al-Ṣayyab being somehow more influenced by Eliot. The difference in the attitudes of both poets stems from their different historical positions. For Darwish Palestinian trauma had been such an overwhelming and molding experience, that the whole scope of his poetics evolved around its working out. Its totality of experience undermines other cultural references and makes them seem secondary. Al-Ṣayyab's confrontation with the West and with colonialism, though extremely powerful, has less of a traumatic flavor.
Noticeably, what forcibly presents itself is a clear Us-Them context. We find the speaker listening to his enemies' conversation:

"I hear, my friend, what the enemies are shouting/ I hear them from a crack in the tent of the sky…" The speaker here is presumably dead, or at least out of earthly history. From his (temporary) defeated historical position, through a crack, or a rupture (fajwah) in the tent of the sky he is able to listen to the 'enemies' as they converse, but what he is in fact bearing witness to is less their actual conversation, and more their subconscious speech. What they are saying is:

Oh, woe to him whose lung has breathed the air
From a stolen lung!...
Oh, woe to him whose drink is blood!
And to him who built a garden…whose soil is of fragmented bodies
Woe to him from its poisonous flower.

The colonizer, though consciously denying it, is actually painfully aware of his unethical deeds. Here, the very air the colonizer is inhaling is actually taken from the stolen lung of his dispossessed, traumatized victim. He is aware, though, that his garden which is founded upon the remains of natives' bodies, may only produce a poisonous flower. The perverted, 'botanical' resurrection of the victims in the form of new blossoming flowers, which now fill the gardens of the new settler-state, may only yield poison. Eliot's symbolic corpse which, as suggested by some scholars, perversely alluded to both ancient ceremonies of fertility deities (the most renowned of is Demeter the Greek goddess of the harvest) and to the possible resurrection of Christ, is granted a more historic, horrific meaning.236 The victims' bodies are in fact resurrected

236 Bush (editor), T.S Eliot: The Modernist in History, Ch. 3.
and end up given a new form, but there is nothing glorified or mystical about this reincarnated resurrection.

If the image of the resurrected corpse is at the center of this early dialogue with Eliot, we may notice how in addition, the young Darwish incorporates into the world of the poem other elements pertaining to the same section from "The Burial of the Dead." First, there are the land's two palms likened to two hungry wolves, which echo Eliot's reference to the dog, who might "with his nails" dig up the corpse again. Second, by ending the poem with the phrase, "its poisonous flower", Darwish, like Eliot, evokes the presence of Baudelaire's "Les Fleurs du Mal" (The Flowers of Evil). Here again, it is the re-contextualization of Baudelaire, and the different way in which he references him that differentiates Darwish's poem from the "Waste Land", infusing it with its clear anti-colonial flavor.

Let us first recall Eliot's direct quote from Baudelaire's introductory poem "To the Reader", the preface to the "Les Fleurs du mal" collection. In the very last line of "Burial of the Dead" the poem's speaker quotes from "To the Reader", saying: “You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!” The reference creates a direct connection between the readers of the two poems (that of the "Waste Land" and that of "Les Fleurs du mal"). Just as Baudelaire's recourse to the reader implicates him in sharing the evils of humanity and especially the sins of hypocrisy and ennui, so does Eliot, in a similar manner, implicate his reader.

Darwish though, disavows the appeal to an equally guilty human 'brother'/reader. In solely evoking the core image of the 'evil flower', Darwish emphasizes the fact that self-guilt and hypocrisy are all attributes of the other, namely the Zionist/Western colonizer. It is by the double
gesture of referencing Eliot and subverting his original meaning, that Darwish differentiates himself from Western universalism. By turning his back on both Eliot's and Baudelaire's all encompassing, self-tormenting crisis of a *meaningless* and decedent existence, he insists instead on the reoccurring violent cycle inflicted by colonial trauma, holding it accountable for a twisted form of resurrection and for the disruption of both cultural and spiritual continuity and meaning.

Our discussion of "?" perfectly demonstrates how image and voice counter one another in Darwish's encounter with Eliot. While Eliot's core imagery is referenced and evoked (i.e: "the Burial of the Dead" segment), it is Eliot's (and by implication the 'West's') repression of trauma evident in the casual voice of his 'botanical' conversation with Stetson, with its extremely ironic undertones, that is totally transformed by Darwish. Darwish instead produces a prophetic voice, through which ethical truth is articulated. The call for justice is both part of Darwish's desire to assert a national selfhood, as well as a rejection of Eliot's mode of complicity. Unlike Baudelaire or Eliot, Darwish's "fleurs du mal" are left as a haunting image testifying to the colonizer's crimes.

**Palestinizing Prufrock: A Close Reading of "Grief and Wrath"**

If the first poem discussed above affords us a re-rendering of Eliot's resurrected corpse, and presents us with Darwish's colonial take on the theme of that resurrection, then the second one revisits another famous Eliot poem, as it generates a Palestinian take on the opening scene of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Unlike the obscure nature of Darwish's first poem's title, we encounter here an extremely overt title. By titling two abstract, wide emotional chords, 'grief' and 'wrath', Darwish situates us between two impulses, or two possible reactions which present themselves to Palestinians facing their post-Nakba state. It has been the contention of Darwish's declarative first poem (discussed in detail in chapter one), reflected also in his non-poetic
statements, that grief and sorrow over that which has been lost must be pragmatically abandoned, at least to a certain degree, and replaced with wrath. Here is the full poem in Arabic, followed by my own English translation:

الحزن والغضب

الصوت في شفتيك لا يُطرق، والدار في رنتيك لا تُغلب، وأبو أبيك على حذاء مهاجر يُصلب، وشفاهها تعطي سواك، وندها يُحلب، فعلام لا تغضب؟

أمسى الثقيلا في الليل، من حان لحان، شفتاك حاملتان، كل أنين غاب السنديان، ورويتي لي للمرة الخمسين، حب فلاينة، وهوى فلاين، وزجاجة الكونيك، والخيم، والسيف الياباني، يعتما تحذر جرحك المقوّع، إعردة القاني، إعتبا تطوع يا كنار الليل، جامحة الأماني، الفتيح في شفتيك، تهمد ما بنت من الأغاني، فعلام لا تغضب؟

قالوا: إبتسم لتعيش! إذا بنتك، عيونك، تلغمت عند الطريق، وترأت عنك من قلب يزعمه الحريق، وحلفت لي: إني سعيد يا رفيق! عيناك، في جلسة البسمات، الكريش، والخضرة، والجسد الرشيق، إذا رأيت دمي بخمرك، كيف تصرب يا رفيق؟

القرية الأطلال، والناطور، والأرض، والبيات، وجذوع زيتوناتك، أعشاش يوم، أو غرب، أمن هذي المحراث هذا العام، أمن ربي التراب يا أنت!.. أين أنت؟.. أين أنت؟.. أين أنت؟.. أين أنت؟.. أين أنت؟.. أين جدار؟.. أين هبطت من السحاب؟.. أترى تصوون كرامة الموتى، ذتطرق في ختام الليل، باب؟.. فعلام لا تغضب؟

أحبها؟ أحبها؟ ارتجفت، على جدائلها الطويلة، كأنت، جملتها، لكنها رقصت على قبري، وأيامي القليلة، تخاصرت، والآخرين، في حلبة الرقص الطويلة، وأنا وأنت، نتعاب التاريخ، والعلم الذي فقد الرجولة، أمن نحن؟ أدع نزق الشوارع يرتوي من ذل رابتنا القديمة، فعلام لا تغضب؟

إن حمنا الحزن أوعما، وما طلب الصباح، وإن الحزن نار، تحمل الأحيام، شهوتها، وتوقظها الرياح، والرياح عندك، كيف تلجمها؟.. وما لك من سلاح.. لا لقاء الرياح والنيران.. في وطن مني؟

Darwish, Diwan, 56-59.
Grief and Wrath

There is no sound coming from your lips / And the fire in your lungs doesn't prevail/ And your father's father crucified while in his immigrant shoes/ And her lips are given to another, and her bosom milked/ And why aren't you mad?

1

Yesterday we met up on night's road, from bar to bar/Your lips were pregnant with/All the longings of the oak forest/As you told me for the fiftieth time/About the love of so and so and the passion of another/The cognac bottle,/The tents, and the sword of al-Yamaní!/In vain you saturate your open wound /With the merrymaking of the bottle!/In vain, oh night-bird, you subdue unruly aspirations/The wind from your lips…ruins what you have built from poems! And why aren't you mad?

2

They said: smile that you may live!/So your eyes smiled at the road/Disowning a heart extinguished by fire /As you swore to me: I am happy, oh friend!/Reading the philosophy of slave-smiles:/Wine, vegetables and a thin body!/And if you see my blood in your wine, /How then can you drink, my friend?

3

Village ruins/The guard, and the land and the waste/And your olive trunks/Nests of owls or crows!/Who prepared the plow this year/Who cultivated the soil?/Oh you! Where is your brother, where is your father?/They are but a mirage!/Where did you come from…from a fence?/Or landed from the clouds?/Don't you see the dignity of the dead./Leaving a door at the closing of the night?/
And why aren't you mad?

4

Do you love her?/I have loved before you/And dangled on her shadowy strands/She was pretty/But she danced on my grave, and my numbered days/She put her hand on the waist of others…on the long dance floor/And you and me, admonish the history/And the flag that lost its manhood/Who are we?/Let the irritability of the streets/Be saturated by our humiliated murdered flag/And why are you not mad?

5

For we have carried grief for years, and morning has yet to come/And grief is a fire whose passion is weakened by the days/Awakened by the winds/And your wind, how will it be restrained?/And you have no weapon/Accept the meeting of wind and fire /In an ownerless land.

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238 In lack of a full English translation of the poem, I provide my own translation.
This desired transformation from a state of grief to a state of wrath is actualized in the poem, through a rhetorical dialogue between the speaker and his male addressee friend, in which the reoccurring question posed to the addressee is "and why aren't you mad?" (faʿalama la taghdb?). The anaphoric question is repeated several times and is set against the background of a ruined, shattered, fragmented environment. Through the description of the addressee, the first expositional stanza presents us with the humiliation that follows the trauma of dispossessio:
The addressee of the poem is devoid of merit (tarab), while "the fire in his lungs doesn't prevail". The humiliation of the addressee is further enhanced by the gendered image of the land as a woman whose' lips and breasts are offered to others.239

In what way are Eliot in general and the "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" specifically present in the poem? First, both poems are structured around a similar core scene in which the speaker of the poem and his addressee are strolling through the streets of a city. Moreover, the ambiance of a drunken night which prevails in Prufrock resonates with a similar tone in "Grief and Wrath." If Prufrock's speaker is strolling through: "restless nights in one-night cheap hotels", then Darwish's speaker and his friend are… 'bar hopping': "Yesterday we met up on night's road, from bar to bar ", while accompanied by: "the bottle of Cognac".240 This general similarity between the poems is further deepened by Darwish's subverted use of another core image taken from the opening of Prufrock, which leaves little doubt as to his engagement with Eliot's poem.

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239 For more on the subject of the land as a gendered object in Palestinian cultural discourse see: Ball, Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial Feminist Perspective.

240 Darwish, Diwan, 56, my translation; Eliot, T S. The Waste Land, 1.
While Prufrock's evening is "spread out against the sky, like some patient etherized upon a table", it is the addressee in Darwish's poem that fruitlessly attempts to "etherize" his "open wound" with the "merry making" ('arbadah) of the bottle (i.e. by drinking). Once again, Eliot's existential decadent, alienated anesthesia, encapsulated by the evening as a patient is re-cast in the form of a concrete, traumatic un-etherized wound. In a similar manner, Eliot's famous abstract rhetoric, "overwhelming question" in Prufrock: "Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?' Let us go and make our visit", is transformed into the anaphoric specific demand set by the speaker to his addressee friend: "And why aren't you mad?".

Perhaps the most powerful comparative component in the poem appears in the concluding segment of its fourth part, where the speaker exclaims, providing an intermediate conclusion to their conversation so far: Who are we?/Let the irritability of the streets/Be saturated by our humiliated murdered flag.\(^ {242} \) In the fragmented aftermath of the Nakba and of national trauma, the speaker and his friend wander around in search of their own identity, and again the identity-crisis presented in Eliot's poem, that of an alienated and meaningless existence is substituted for the crisis of identity within a world specifically inflicted by colonial violence. Here Darwish subverts Prufrock's "insidious streets" with their concealed erotic promise, and creates streets that are, in fact, an extension of the speaker's and of his friend's national calamity, streets whose irritability may only be 'cured' and saturated by the speaker's humiliated flag.

\(^ {241} \) The question that seeks to provoke an emotional response from the 'etherized' addressee in Darwish's poem, could be read, intertextually, as an address to Elliot himself, challenging his ironic, detached stance.

\(^ {242} \) Darwish, Diwan, 59.
Yet Darwish's initial encounter with Eliot in this poem goes beyond his critique of its 'universality' and the transformation of the 'universal, existential' imagery into the specific, post-traumatic, post-Nakba images. As the poem proceeds and the two protagonists make their way through the newly colonized city, Darwish's speaker creates a subtle hierarchy between his poetry and that of Eliot's. This hierarchy is achieved by setting the actual literary cultural reference of the "Waste Land", alongside another famous cultural reference, that of 'atlal (ruins). By setting the two references on the same plane, Darwish is first and foremost establishing a cultural affinity, a kind of equality between the classical Arabic 'atlal tradition as embodying a certain form of nostalgia, and the modern Western reference of the Waste Land. At the same time, he affords both references a marginalized and secondary status in relation to the actual representation of Palestine's traumatic state.243

Here is the quotation from the opening of the stanza: "Village ruins (al-atlal)/The guard, and the land and the waste (wal-ard wal-yabab)..." By treating these references as a known sequence of cultural/literary catch phrases Darwish is firstly assumes a shared legacy, both between his speaker and his friend, but more importantly between his speaker and the assumed reader. A form of irony is at play here, as the romantic pathos of both al-atlal and of "The Waste Land" is negated by the distance that is evident in the speaker's tone. To a great degree, Darwish's use of the al-atlal here resonates with what Khayyat writes of it in the context of south Lebanese poetry:

Ruins occasion a *re*-reckoning with the very notion of “memory” by undoing the pathos of nostalgia embedded in the classical Arabic literary tradition of contemplating ruins. Ruins in the poetry under study open up spaces of contemplation that neither resolve nor assuage the burden of the past.\textsuperscript{244}

The manner in which Darwish references these Arabic and Western canonic representations of loss and nostalgia, empties them from their obvious status as master signifiers, subordinating and marginalizing them in relation to the experience of colonial trauma. Moreover, Darwish's actual reference within the poem to Eliot's classic masterpiece constitutes a form of deconstruction. While the cultural reference "The Waste Land" is rendered in Arabic *al-Ard al-Yabab*, Darwish separates the two components of the term into *al-ard wa-al-yabab*, the Land and the Waste. This linguistic move is again typical to Darwish's double ambivalent gesture toward Eliot, a partial adaptation which in turn emphasizes the essential difference characterizing their ethical positions. The land itself is not a Wasteland, and because of this, it is important to linguistically mark it as separate from the 'waste' (*yabab*). Thus, its purity stands as a primordial object, while the Waste afflicted upon it is presented separately, as it is an outcome of a specific historic condition, namely that of colonial takeover.

No wonder then that these references are followed by a series of rhetorical questions, aiming at describe the actual traumatic present state of affairs:

And your olive trunks/Nests of owls or crows! /Who prepared the plow this year/Who cultivated the soil? /Oh you! Where is your brother, where is your father? /They are but a mirage! /Where did you come from…from a fence? /Or landed from the clouds? \textsuperscript{245}

\textsuperscript{244} Khayyat, "Southern Counterpublics", 176.

\textsuperscript{245} Darwish, *Diwan*, 58, my translation.
The almost banal mentioning of the cultural references of al-Atlal and of "The Waste Land", with their ironic tone, diminish in comparison to the addressee's pathos, when he sets to describe the specific sense of traumatic loss and absence. In another sense then, the addressee's position of nostalgic grief, which the speaker of the poem (Darwish's voice, one may assume) advocates against, is also, symbolically, Eliot's aesthetic position. The addressee is ineffectively attempting to live an etherized, normalized life, ignorant of both the scope of grief and of wrath. He is in fact participating in an un-authentic experience, which falsehood, the speaker, time and again, seeks to expose. This constant reprove is evident in every stanza of the poem, with phrases such as: "The wind in your lips...ruins what you have attempted to build from songs", but especially in the anaphoric bewildering question posed at the end of each stanza: "And why aren't you mad?"\textsuperscript{246}

Unlike Prufrock's protagonists who wander within the matrix of an erotically charged city, encapsulated within their own neurotic isolated and frustrated desires, Darwish's early heroes are too overwhelmed by their national calamity, too preoccupied with the question of their own identity in the aftermath of colonial trauma to 'normally' desire. Just like al-Atlal, "The Waste Land" comes to function in the poem as a marginalized cultural reference, whose mentioning reinforces and validates the ongoing specific post-Nakba traumatic existence within colonized Palestine.

Moreover, by simultaneously paying a tribute to "The Waste Land" while pointing out its irrelevance and shortcomings, Darwish positions Palestinian subjectivity in relation to the history

\textsuperscript{246} Darwish, \textit{Diwan}, 57, my translation.
of modern Western poetics, while according it a zeal that undermines the very universal status of Eliot's legacy. If in the poem titled: "?” Darwish's collective, prophetic voice was set in contrast to the alienated, repressed persona of Eliot's protagonist in "The Waste Land", then in "Grief and Wrath", that very stance is internalized, personified by the speaker's fellow addressee, which embodies in his disposition, a false-self, Eliot kind of ethical and existential stance.

Conclusion

In this chapter I ventured to make present Darwish's very first intertextual encounters (from his first collection of poetry, Olive Leaves), which had been largely overlooked by critics because of the fetishist, idealized manner in which they tended to view Palestinian literature, subordinating its aesthetics to a narrow definition of 'resistance literature'. Both Bialik and Eliot, are but two examples from an abundance of literary Western and Arabic references conjured by Darwish in the Olive Leaves collection (Kafka, Lorca and Whitman to name just a few). Of no less importance than giving these intertextual encounters a stage was to present readings, which do not compromise the complexity of the literary in favor of a narrow, reductionist political interpretation. Thus, my reading of Darwish's appropriation of Bialik's canonic poem refrained from the pitfalls of both a 'normalizing' reading, and of a narrow 'anti-colonial' reading, offering instead an alternative in which Darwish's poetic take on Bialik's poem is ambivalent, both paying tribute to its structure, music and core images, while transcending and parodying it, as he infuses it with his own Palestinian subjectivity.

In the case of Eliot, my reading came to counter the belated scholarship, in which a different form of 'normalization' had taken place, as both poets were put side by side, compared for their already accomplished and acknowledged poetic legacies. Instead, my reading sought do
deconstruct the early engagement of Darwish with Eliot, as part of the general anti-colonial moment taking place within modern Arabic poetry during the 1950's. Here again, I closely examined how Darwish utilized some of Eliot's core imagery, while differentiating himself from Eliot's detached, alienated stance, in favor of manufacturing a fundamentally prophetic voice, actively advocating for truth and justice, within a colonial context. In both these intertextual readings (Bialik's and Eliot's) Darwish's construction of a distinctly Palestinian oppressed and struggling voice undermines the 'universality' or 'canonicity' of these texts, proposing instead a poetics rooted within an anti-colonial world view of human history. Darwish's construction of this new form of subjectivity within Palestinian poetry, his insistence on joining in with the modern revolution already taking place in Arabic literature, becomes evident through these intertextual readings.

Finally, within the contemporary discourse on intertextuality, these early formations in Darwish's voyage, resonate best with Bhabha's definition of post-colonial culture, quoted in the preface of this chapter, in which there is: "no recognition of master and slave… there is only the matter of the enslaved master, the un-mastered slave". Indeed, in this early intermediate stage, Darwish's poetical logos is still heavily embedded with the national positive zeal of nation building and its proposed challenges. It is only later on, with the gradual converting of his poetry into Exilic poetry, and with the transformation of Palestine from a solely geographical signifier into a signifier of a mythic space, a universal metaphor representing various forms of loss, one of which is the Arabic lost paradisiacal past of al-Andalus, that Darwish slowly parts (never deserting) with the binding poetics of the post-colonial Subject.

247 Bhabha, Location, 131.
Chapter 3: Darwish's Afterlife Within Israeli Literature: Hebrew Translations and Adaptations of "Identity Card"

In the following chapter, our thesis exits the realm of Darwish's very first collection of poems, and its contextualization within both Palestinian and modern Arabic literature, and moves into the realm of its afterlife within Israeli literature and culture. We are confronted with an intriguing fact that it is actually one specific poem from the very same formative years, that continues to unequivocally occupy, one is tempted to say haunt, mainstream Israeli discourse in relation to Darwish. This poem is none other than "Identity Card", the closing poem of the *Olive Leaves* collection.

A selection of the various translations, readings, references and adaptations of this poem will be at the center of this chapter. I will pose two central questions: First, why is it that Israeli cultural and literary discourse is not only fascinated by this poem, but is also fixated upon it, sometimes threatened by it? What are the ideological barriers which prevent mainstream Israeli culture from going beyond it, and exploring other aspects of Darwish's work? Second, as Venuti and other translation scholars tell us, translation is always an ideological practice, a product of a socio-political and cultural formations, conditioned by a set of political, economic, and cultural circumstances prevalent in a particular historical moment. Therefore, the translator himself is a product of the very same social conditioning. Consequently, I will explore what each of the various translations and readings of the poem reveal to us about the prevailing manifest or

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hidden cultural agendas. How might the deconstruction of these translations and readings afford us new insights, into the power relations taking place within the Israeli literary and cultural field?

The essentialist manner in which Hebrew literature and culture have come to treat Darwish is crystalized by the central place they accorded to a single poem, out of such a prolific and vast body of poetic work. The contrast between Darwish's prolific body of work, its everchanging poetic evolution and this fetishistic choice to concentrate, time and again, upon one specific poem, is further amplified as we discover that Darwish's attitude toward this very poem had been ambivalent from its very composition. Darwish was highly aware of the essentialist nature of the poem, and of its problematic ramifications. It is this quality of essentialism which had led him, in a later stage of his poetic career, to somewhat renounce the poem, and refrain from reciting it publicly, even if it had always remained a 'hit', and in extremely high demand among audiences.

Resisting the Appeal of the Colonizing Other: "Identity Card" and the Question of Anti-Colonial Palestinian Resistance

As we have witnessed in the first and second chapters of this thesis, Darwish addressed the question of anti-colonial resistance in poetry, aligning his own poetics with the more general anti-colonial movement in modern Arabic poetry. Yet before proceeding to explore his own take on the poem, a poem which had been perhaps most identified with the early Palestinian anti-colonial struggle, and in order to properly historicize its numerous Hebrew translations, we must first define what we are specifically designating when we speak of the colonial context of Israel-Palestine.
Colonialism versus Settler Colonialism in Israel-Palestine

Within the different theoretical definitions of the Israeli-Palestinian conundrum, this thesis follows the work of Veracini and other scholars who view Israel fundamentally as a settler-colonial state. Veracini distinctly distinguishes between 'colonialism' which "succeeds by keeping colonizer and colonized separate", and 'settler colonialism': "where ultimate success is achieved when the settlers are 'indigenized' and cease to be seen as settlers". These definitions enable Veracini to apply his model to both the case of Palestinians citizens of Israel, who were occupied in the 1948 Nakba, yet eventually remained under the rule of sovereign Israel, and the case of 1967 Palestinians, who are currently stateless (most of which belong to the Palestinian authority), and who partly still remain de-facto under Israeli military rule.

Veracini follows many other scholars in arguing that: "settler colonial objectives have informed Zionist actions pre-1948, post-1948 and post-1967". Settler colonialism is: "essentially defined by processes where an exogenous collective replaces an indigenous one", and it is here that Veracini's claim becomes extremely relevant to our literary discussion of Darwish. In his description, what had taken place within the 1948 borders of the state of Israel is a successful case of settler colonialism, whereas the 1967 colonial reality (in the West Bank and Gaza) is a

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249 Veracini, "The Other Shift", 26-42.
252 Veracini, "The Other Shift", 28.
testimony to Israel’s failure to legitimize and normalize the settler-colonial project there. For settler colonialism, the distinction between the colonizer and the colonized is an intermediate state to be later abolished and replaced by a stage: "where the indigenous population has been reduced to a 'manageable remnant'." 253

Therefore, an important criterion differentiating the two is connected to the subject of citizenship, where:

Under colonial conditions, citizenship rights for the colonized are denied or indefinitely postponed in order to disallow native sovereign capacities. Under the classic settler colonial model, on the other hand, because of the radical reduction of the indigenous population, elements of a settler citizenship can be selectively offered as a means to eradicate residual sovereign impulses. 254

The usage of the colonizer-colonized discursive categories therefore, indicates the prevalence of the colonial state, and the inability of the settler colonial project to arrive at its final goals. Naturally, one may not locate Darwish’s early poetry within the final stage of the settler colonial paradigm implemented within the 1948 territories occupied by Israel, since it was only much later that Israel managed to 'indigenize itself' by legitimizing and normalizing the status of its control over these territories. The composition of the poem belongs therefore to the initial 'colonial' stage in the Zionist settler-colonial paradigm, where the terms colonizer-colonized were still very much categories which the Zionist regime had to confront. But it is precisely the

253 Veracini, "The Other Shift", 29.
254 Veracini, "The Other Shift", 30.
delegitimizing status of Darwish's early poetry which keeps reminding, and unsettling the settler-colonial project of post 1948 Israel. Its haunting appeal lies in its ability to constantly remind the 'successful' project of settler colonialism in sovereign Israel, of the colonial history upon which it had founded itself. Locating Darwish's evolving relationship toward the poem "Identity Card" within the tension between colonialism and settler-colonialism is thus especially important, in order to understand its ambivalent appeal to Israeli cultural discourse.

Refusing the Colonized Role: Darwish's Disavowal of "Identity Card"

If Israeli cultural discourse developed an obsession toward the poem, then Darwish, on the contrary, insisted upon dis-identifying and distancing himself from it. This, no doubt pertained to his own self-articulation of a post-colonial subjectivity, which refuses to succumb to the historic materialistic colonial conditions, in an ongoing effort to defy and transcend them. Here first is the full version of both the Arabic original and its translation into English:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity-Card 255</th>
<th>بطاقة هوية256</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write it down:</td>
<td>سجل أنا عربي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an Arab.</td>
<td>و رقم بطاقي خمسون ألف</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ID card number is 50,000.</td>
<td>وأطفالي ثمانية</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children: eight</td>
<td>و تاسعهم سيأتي بعد صيف</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the ninth is coming after the summer.</td>
<td>قبل تغضب</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you angry?</td>
<td>سجل أنا عربي</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write it down:</td>
<td>وأعمل مع رفاق الکح في محجر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am an Arab.</td>
<td>وأطفالي ثمانية</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work with my toiling comrades in a quarry.</td>
<td>أسل لهم رغيف الخبز</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My children are eight,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And out of the rocks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

255 Darwish, "Identity Card".
256 Darwish, Diwan, 71-74.
I draw their bread,
Clothing and writing paper.
I do not beg for charity at your door
Nor do I grovel
At your doorstep tiles.
Does that anger you?

Write it down:
I am an Arab,
A name without a title,
Patient in a country where everything
Lives on flared-up anger.
My roots…
Took firm hold before the birth of time,
Before the beginning of the ages,
Before the cypress and olives,
Before the growth of pastures.
My father…of the people of the plow,
Not of noble masters.
My grandfather, a peasant
Of no prominent lineage,
Taught me pride of self before reading of books.
My house is a watchman’s hut
Of sticks and reed.
Does my status satisfy you?
I am a name without a title

Write it down:
I am an Arab.
Hair coal-black,
Eyes brown,
My distinguishing feature:
On my head a koufiyah topped by the igal,
And my palms, rough as stone,
Scratch anyone who touches them.
My address:
An unarmed village—forgotten—
Whose streets are nameless,
And all its men are in the field and quarry.
Are you angry?

Write it down:
I am an Arab
Robbed of my ancestors’ vineyards
And of the land cultivated
By me and all my children.
Nothing is left for us and my grandchildren
Except these rocks…
Will your government take them too, as
reported?
Therefore,

Write at the top of page one:
I do not hate people,
I do not assault anyone,
But…if I get hungry,
I eat the flesh of my usurper.
Beware…beware…of my hunger,
And of my anger!

The poem presents us with a long monologue carried out by a mature Arab man, a father of eight children. The protagonist of the poem confronts the unseen officer or representative of what is most probably the military regime at the time. As Darwish himself tell us, the inspiration for the poem had come to him from a real-life experience. During the 1960's, Darwish was prohibited by the Israeli military rule from leaving the area of the city of Haifa. He was required to make himself present, on a daily basis, to the officer of the Ministry of Interior. During one of these callings he protested to his face, exclaiming: "Write it down, I am an Arab". Thus, the anaphoric line, opening each stanza of the poem, is a direct quote from this true encounter.

We witness a subversive role change within the poem, in which the Palestinian native, subordinated in the present historical moment, dictates to the unnamed officer, a form of historical narrative, an oral autobiography, at once personal and collective. This dictation defies

257 Darwish, Mahmoud, *Hamishim*, 76.
258 Darwish, Mahmoud, *Hamishim*, 76.
the occupier's desire to control and document, since it undermines his very authority to do so. Moreover, the reversal of power relations between the occupied and the occupier exposes the superficiality of the state’s control mechanism, by revealing the superior nature of the native's relationship to the land, one that precedes any sort of possible historic documentation.

With its emphasis on a rocky primordial landscape, and on a universal, unnamed surroundings, the poem portrays a kind of a pre-historic history. The poem’s speaker, who works in a quarry, declares in the opening, “My children are eight / And out of the rocks / I draw their bread / Clothing and writing paper.” The presence of stones and rocks accompanies the whole of the poem, represented in each of the different stanzas. The speaker's palm is as: "rough as a stone" (stanza 4), while his father comes from the: " the people of the plow, not of noble masters." (stanza 5). This "stone-age" history reaches its climactic description in the fourth stanza, where it is given a pre-historical status, one that actually precedes both culture and agriculture: " My roots… /Took firm hold before the birth of time / Before the beginning of the ages / Before the cypress and olives / Before the growth of pastures.”

As mentioned before, within this reversal of roles, the native speaker presents the occupier with the task of documenting the impossible, for there is no way that the project of modern Hebrew nationalism will be able to appropriate something which roots have taken: "firm hold before the birth of time". The limits of the Zionist project and its inability to fully account for what it

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259 Attempts to decipher the true, biographical identity of the poem's protagonist have been made by some Arab scholars. One such theory claims he was built upon the character of the poet Hannah Ibrahim. See: Muwassi, *Qira'at fi Shi'rih*, 45-60. Muwassi tells us that Hannah Ibrahim, who worked in a quarry and whose home village allegedly corresponds with the village described in the poem had told him that Darwish had based the characteristic of the speaker upon his biography. On the other hand, it is well known that Darwish's father too, had worked in a quarry.
vehemently seeks to appropriate are exemplified through this unrepresentable form of pre-historical existence, and connection to the land.260

Immediately following its composition, the poem became an instant 'hit' in public readings, and in poetry festivals, memorized and chanted by the masses.261 While it was only later in his career that Darwish himself became ambivalent toward the poem, it is extremely interesting to observe that even at the time of its composition, Darwish was well aware of the poem’s interplay between an essentialist mode of identity assertion, and a more historical, realistic tendency. That Darwish had been occupying himself with the question of the poem’s realistic disposition is reflected by the various alterations he made to one specific line, until finally approving its official version, in the volume of his collected poems. The final authorized version of the line which appears at the end of the fourth stanza is: "And all its men are in the field and quarry."

Muwassi tell us that this line had several other earlier versions, which varied in their description of who the anonymous working men were.262 In one documented reading, Darwish added the

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260 There is a minor stream within Hebrew fiction which gives voice to the position of the disposed Palestinian, bearing testimony to the colonial moment of the 1948 Nakba and its ethical ramifications. See for example: S. Yizhar's short story Hirbat Hizeh. The story describes a fictional account given by an Israeli soldier, narrating the occupation of a village during the Nakba. For a discussion of the importance and the limits of Yizhar's story see: Hever, Ha-sipur ve-ha-Le’om, 187-188.

Another short story written by Yehoshua, Mul ha-Ye’arot presents us with a later attempt to un-settle Israeli settler-colonialism. The story describes a relationship between a Jewish Israeli student and an old, symbolically mute (his tongue had been cut) Palestinian and his daughter, the sole survivors of a demolished village in the Nakba. The student, who has a state appointment to guard the forest becomes gradually aware of its hidden history, and eventually ambivalently cooperates with the Palestinian’s desire to burn the forest. Notwithstanding the small number of these works, they hold a central place within literary discourse and criticism. Significantly, these canonical works are narrated by the Jewish Israeli protagonists and do not attempt to narrate the story from the dispossessed own position.

261 Muwassi, Qira’at, 45-60.

262 Muwassi, Qira’at, 45-60.
description: "who love communism". In another reading that he gave on the radio of Cairo, it had been: "who love chivalry (farusiyyah)." Muhammad Taha, a poet and one of Darwish's high school classmates testified before Muwassi that he had heard a version, in which the men were described as men "who stop slavery", finally other testified versions included: "who love heroism", and "who love Arabhood". The social and cultural meaning and context of each of these alterations may of course be further explored, but in the context of our discussion what is important to highlight is the contrast between Darwish's endless playfulness around this poetic line, and his final decision, to leave the official version as abstract and as general as possible. No doubt these various alterations have something to do with the tension between the actual historicity of the poem and the manufacturing of an ahistorical fantasy in it.

The construction of a historical persona in the poem fits with the “essentialist strategy” that Ghanim identifies as central in the writings of Palestinian intellectuals from the late 1950’s and on. Discussing the works of prominent intellectual figures such as Hannah Abu Hannah, Tawfik Ziad and Darwish himself, Ghanim follows Spivak who identifies "strategic essentialism" as a way to cope with a symbolic or actual threat of annihilation, and as a defense mechanism used by oppressed groups. Ghanim argues that as a reaction to the essentialist treatment of the Palestinians by the Hebrew regime, they constructed a proud essentialist identity.

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263 Muwassi, *Qira’at*, 45-60.

264 Al-Osta, *Zawaher Salbiah fi Masirah Mahmoud Darwish al-Sha’ariah*, 7-8. Thus, for example, al-Osta discusses Darwish's omission of the description: "who love communism". He assumes that it had been omitted in fulfillment of the request of Ahmad Said Mahmadia, the founder of *Dar al-‘Awdah* publishing house, who wished for the poem to be published in Arab countries opposing communism.

265 Ghanim, *Livnot*, 75.

of their own. She further qualifies this identity as a romantic identity, which imagines itself as harmonious with nature, until this imagined harmony is disrupted by the occupier’s violent nationalism.

Ghanim’s historical description seems to perfectly correspond with Darwish’s poem, and with the various alterations of the above discussed line. By leaving the men working in the field and the quarry as bare as possible, by un-qualifying them further, Darwish undoubtedly prevents a narrowed, more specific historical context from being defined. Just as the village in the poem is ‘unknown’, and its street ‘unnamed’, so it is important that the men, be unspecified working men, so as to comply with the construction of a more abstract ahistorical fantasy. It is the fact that Darwish, at various occasions and readings, chose to slightly break away from this ‘hard core’ essentialist description that discloses his early inner ambivalence toward the subject.

Darwish’s final decision to leave the discussed line as unmarked as possible testifies to his understanding of the poem as a poem that necessitates an essentialist anti-colonial resisting tone. However, it is this very sense of an anti-colonial resistance that is founded solely upon the dichotomous relationship of occupier and occupied that had caused Darwish to renounce the poem later on in his poetic career.

Indeed, in later years, ignoring its vast popularity and the crowds’ demand to hear it, Darwish repeatedly refused to recite the poem during public readings across the Arab world.267 In an interview he gave in 1991, Darwish harshly expressed his dislike for the poem, saying:

“This poem, write it down, I am an Arab, I can’t stand! I tried to erase it from my books, but

267 Muwassi, Qira’at, 45-60.
discovered it had been rooted into the hearts of the readers to the degree that I couldn’t object to it. That it is why I gave up.”

Darwish's evolving attitude toward "Identity Card" encapsulates, to a large degree, his general gradual movement from a poetics of resistance which defined itself in an essentialist manner to a more complex, nuanced poetics, in which Palestinian identity locates itself in relation to Arabic history and holds complex interconnections with both Western and Arabic cultures and literatures. Indeed, as we have observed throughout this dissertation, Darwish was keenly aware, from an early age, of the need to distance his poetry from the popular binary rhetoric prevailing within the discourse of 1950's third world liberation movements, which postulated a dichotomy between the occupier and the occupied. This kind of discourse was reflected in the works of prominent anti-colonial intellectuals during the 1950's, such as Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.269

Thus, the wrathful, self-asserting speaker presented in "Identity Card" was to give birth, later on, to a series of multiple and diverse speakers, whose resistant poetic stance transcends the narrow dichotomy in which the occupied asserts his identity solely through countering that of the occupier. These speakers' discourses are embedded in rich Arab cultural heritage, as well as in other referential mythologies. Moreover, the "I" in Darwish's later poetics might possess an opposite tone, in which the occupied Palestinian is confident enough of his own moral stance, so as to enter into a flexible, open dialogue with his imagined occupier, and even offer him compassion. The nature of Darwish's dialogical stance in relation to the Zionist other has been

269 Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 
briefly explored by Siddiq. Through a reading of various poems addressed to the Zionist Other, he demonstrates how the character of the Israeli Jew is portrayed by Darwish as an enemy, either to be judged in his court, or to be converted, through a deep recognition of his own faults to be a friend and a 'brother'.

Darwish's gradual movement toward transcending his fixed position as an occupied, colonial subject, defining himself solely vis-à-vis the Zionist occupier, coincides with his withdrawal from the local poetry scene in 1970 and his embarking on an odyssey across the Arab world. However, whereas the conscious desertion of "Identity Card" in favor of more complex articulations of post-colonial identity and resistance was a crucial step in Darwish's poetical development, Israeli cultural discourse remained shackled and fixated upon the very colonial condition reflected by the poem. In order to understand why Hebrew readers remained 'stuck' in identifying Darwish with that speaker who holds a romantic, pre-historic relationship with the land, we must first fully understand Darwish's status within the context of modern Hebrew culture and literature.

**Darwish's Symbolic Capital within Hebrew Culture**

It is apparent that Darwish's poetry was viewed as a threat to the very security of the Hebrew state in its early formative days. There is sufficient proof in the fact that he was denied free movement in order to prevent him from participating in poetry festivals. He was, moreover,

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imprisoned and threatened at an extremely early age to cease writing 'inciting poetry'.

Furthermore, the first translation of "Identity Card" by Avraham Yinon, then an Arabic teacher at the Hebrew University was ordered by the Prime Minister's office, and first circulated within a private booklet within the office. As Ghanim tells us, following the massive emigration/escape of most prominent Palestinian intellectuals in the post 1948 years, it was poets like Samih al-Kasem and Darwish that had assumed the role of intellectual leaders filling the void that had been created.

One, to be sure, would expect this anxiety of the young Zionist state in facing any kind of cultural resistance. However, it seems far more perplexing to find that Darwish's presence continued to be an ever-growing source of anxiety in the many years to follow.

This bewilderment expands, as one realizes that the ambivalent mixture of both anxiety and interest is unique to Darwish's case within Israeli discourse, whereas other prominent Palestinian writers evoke a much more moderate response. Take for example the acceptance of a writer such as Emil Habibi, whose work was no less subversive than that of Darwish. Habibi ironically described both the hybrid position of the post 1948 Palestinian subject, and the relationship between 1948 Palestinians and 1967 Palestinians. Similarly, one may not qualify the poetry of

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272 See chapter 2 of this dissertation.


274 Ghanim, Livnot, 70-93.

Samih al-Kasem, branded by Kanafani to be one of the "Resistance Poets", as less confrontational than that of Darwish. Even the works of the writer and translator Anton Shammas, which undermined the strong conventional ties between the language of writing and national identity, by writing a novel in Hebrew, had been generally accepted positively.

These writers all produced what Levy lately called "bi-lingual entanglement", which involve a poetics of irony and misunderstanding such as in Habibi's case, or a "post-national poetics of Hebrew verse", which Levy proposes to be the case for Anton Shammas's Hebrew poetry.276 But again, the radical nature of such writings, and the way they expand the limits of what defines Hebrew literature (extensively discussed by Levy), doesn't seem to evoke the same national anxiety and cultural response which Darwish's poetry (especially his earlier poetry, especially the poem presently discussed) still evokes.

What then accounts for this difference in reaction? As provocative as they might be, by working from within settler-colonial Israel, all these writers were inadvertently legitimizing its symbolic status.277 Hannan Hever's discussion of both Habibi and Shammas's works is extremely instructive here.278 Within his detailed analysis of Shammas's ground-breaking novel Arabesques (Arabeskot) and of Habibi's literary works, Hever accounts for the permeation of these texts into the Israeli literary canon. Habibi, Hever claims, writes literature of a national minority that "attaches itself to the majority literature, accepted by it, paying a political price for this

276 Levy, Poetic Trespass, 105-189.
277 Habibi assumed a political position in Israel, serving as a parliament member for the Israeli Communist Party between 1953-1965. His literary work was generally appreciated, and he was awarded the Israel Prize for Arabic literature in 1992. Shammas had studied English and Arabic literature in the Hebrew university.
278 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 283-328.
acceptance", on the other hand Habibi uses "a universal representation in order to undermine the majority culture." He showcases the universalist appeal of his stories in the forefront of the narrative, while "in the backstage a different drama whose subversive action points toward totally different directions usually takes place." His works are thus characterized by a self-critical tone, and by a sympathetic attitude toward women, that are often accorded the roles of central characters, and whose importance surpasses, at many occasions, the importance of the national struggle. These attributes fit the universalistic expectations of the majority culture, which advocates for a universal, western criteria. Habibi, Hever further argues, narrates a double layered story, where an alternative story that "doesn't comply any more to the narrative framework corresponding to the universalist demand of the majority culture is being told." Consequently, Habibi's doubled ironic discourse complicates the classification of his text by the Hebrew reader, locating it as "both part of the Israeli canon, and outside of it."

As for Shammas, Hever examines the unique place afforded to his ground breaking novel Arabesques (Arabeskot). As a Palestinian Christian Israeli, the very act of writing a Hebrew novel is exceptional as it undermines "the traditional boundaries of the national culture", a culture in which Hebrew literature had been given a central role in the process of national

279 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 316, my translation.
280 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 316, my translation.
281 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 313.
282 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 316, my translation.
283 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 324, my translation.
revival. Hever, proposes to read Shammas's Arabesque as a "minority discourse". He points toward the resemblance between Arabesques and the literary model of a "minority literature" founded by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, which postulates the deterritorialization of the major language as the primary condition for the constitution of such a literature. Hever argues that the Hebrew "as the mythical language of Zionism, is subjected in the hands of Shammas to a process of deterritorialization." Hever, however, simultaneously points out the manners in which Shammas's novel is not consistent with the defining principles of a "minority literature" in that it also marks the territorialization of Hebrew as "the language of Israelis". Therefore, the Hebrew readers facing Shammas's novel face complex duality that somewhat resembles the duality facing the readers of Habibi's work: "on the one hand they can't reject him as the ultimate 'other' and ignore him because of his demonstration of Hebrew virtuosity, on the other hand his transgression of Hebrew culture's accepted norms makes it difficult for the majority culture to simply identify with him."

Writing from the position of a national minority, the duality inherent in both Habibi and Shammas's works enables them to challenge some of the most fundamental perceptions of Hebrew literature, while still affording them a place within Israeli literary canon. Darwish on the other hand produced most of his poetic works not from the position of a national minority, but

284 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 285, my translation.

285 Guattari and Gilles, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature.

286 Hever, Ha-Sipur, 301, my translation.

287 Hever, Ha-Sipur 304, my translation. Hever goes on to demonstrate how Shammas's deterritorialization leads to a territorialization of another kind in which the Hebrew dialect of the Arab becomes a 'language of grace' for the major culture. The fashioning of a minority which speaks in a an ancient-new Hebrew "is presented in the novel as the political redemption of the Arab-Israeli" (305).
rather from the position of the dispossessed native. Thus, receiving a place within the discourse of the Israeli cultural majority had never been part of his motivation. This is why his infiltration into Hebrew literary discourse by way of translation disrupts the very foundation of the settler-colonial state, as no other Palestinian writer does. The difficulty to digest Darwish into the literary realm of Israeli culture, as we shall further explore, has to do precisely with the decolonizing nature of this poetry, for as Veracini tells us: "whereas colonialism is followed by (generally only nominal) decolonization, settler colonialism remains ‘impervious to regime change’".288 It is Darwish's exilic position, the fact that he had never agreed to naturalize and acknowledge the Zionist settler-colonial state, which makes his early poetic stance such a powerful challenge and an anxiety provoking presence within Israeli discourse.

It is through two major public political-cultural debates that I would like to demonstrate Darwish's centrality within Israel's cultural discourse. The first takes place in 1988 and involves the poem "Those who Pass within Fleeting Words" written by Darwish at that time, while the second occurs some fifteen year later, in 2002, when the liberal Left, Israeli Minister of Education at the time, Yossi Sarid, proposed to incorporate poems written by Darwish into the high school literature curriculum. These debates, as shall further be elaborated, testify both to the extreme importance accorded to Darwish by Hebrew culture and to the anxiety which this status provoked and still provokes.

288 Veracini, "The Other", 34.
The First debate: "Those who Pass within Fleeting Words" - an Unpublished Poem

Darwish's poem "Those who Pass within Fleeting Words" was first published in January 1988 in a "prominent place on the back page of the Kuwaiti newspaper al-Anba." It was accompanied by the poet's picture and an illustration of Jerusalem featuring the mosque of Omar, traditionally connected to the Arab Muslim claim on Jerusalem. As mentioned by Amit-Kochavi, the poem was published a couple of months following the start of the first Intifada and was interpreted as supporting it, and as calling the Israelis (whom were not explicitly mentioned in it) to move out of the occupied territories, and perhaps from the whole of Israel. As part of the public debate surrounding the poem, numerous Hebrew translations of it were offered, all of which have been surveyed by Amit-Kochavi. The various translations all attempted to answer whether Darwish's call to the unmentioned addressees of the poem, understood to be the Israelis, intended to drive them solely out of the occupied territories (i.e.: The West Bank and the Gaza Strip), or to drive them out of the whole of the country.

Amit-Kochavi further demonstrates how the majority of readers and interpreters, including international readers supporting the idea of a Israeli-Palestinian co-existence, opposed the poem, claiming it called for the destruction of Israel. Counter to these concrete readings, al-Osta

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289 Amit-Kochavi, Tirgumei, 276.
290 Amit-Kochavi, Tirgumei, 276.
291 Amit-Kochavi, Tirgumei, 276-277.
292 Amit-Kochavi, Tirgumei, 277.
claims that the poem presents us with an abstract stance and is not to be interpreted literally.\footnote{Al-Osta, \textit{Al-Adib al-Filas\'tini}, 32-36.} He professes that nothing in the words "our land" or "our seas", which appear in the poem, and which had caused the commotion, suggests the territories of the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. At any rate, whether the poem's intent had been abstract or concrete is secondary to the magnitude of its after-effects. It caused a major falling out in the relationship between Darwish and Hilit Yeshurun, the editor of \textit{Hadarim} (Rooms), a Hebrew literary periodical where some of Darwish's poems were meant to be published. Instead of publishing the poems, the editor, Yeshurun, left a blank page within the intended copy, as a protest against the publication of Darwish's poem. Darwish and Yeshurun gradually reconciled, but the reverberations of the poem went further.\footnote{Amit-Kochavi, \textit{Tirgumei}, 277-280.}

Following the poem's publication, a large demonstration against Darwish was held in Paris, where Darwish was living at the time, calling for his trial and expulsion from Paris on account of being 'the enemy of the Jews'.\footnote{Al-Osta, \textit{Al-Adib al-Filas\'tini}, 32-36.} Al-Osta further argues that as a result of these reactions, Darwish decided to ban the poem from further publications. For al-Osta, this was in line with Darwish's traditional position of appeasing the Zionist Israeli left, motivated by his will to regain acceptance amongst his Israeli supporters.\footnote{Al-Osta, \textit{Al-Adib al-Filas\'tini}, 32-36.} In yet another article, al-Osta delves into the meaning of the importance which Darwish attributed to his place within Hebrew culture, and to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{Al-Osta, \textit{Al-Adib al-Filas\'tini}, 32-36.}
  \item \footnote{Amit-Kochavi, \textit{Tirgumei}, 277-280.}
  \item \footnote{Al-Osta, \textit{Al-Adib al-Filas\'tini}, 32-36.}
  \item \footnote{Al-Osta, \textit{Al-Adib al-Filas\'tini}, 32-36.}
\end{itemize}
the fact that he insisted on having a Jewish-Israeli readership. The article's title, "A Jewish Witness is Required" is a partial quotation from Darwish's full sentence: "A Jewish Witness is Required, in order for the West to believe us". According to al-Osta, Darwish understood that in order to gain the West's support, it was necessary to have Jewish supporters that would advocate for the Palestinian cause, and that without this kind of support even the most moderate Palestinian voice did not stand a chance.

We may conclude that Darwish viewed his representation within Israeli culture and discourse as part of a national Palestinian interest. For the same reason, Darwish had never opposed having any of his poems translated into Hebrew, a prohibition made by many Arab and Palestinian writers. Moreover, so as to ensure as vast variety of publication as possible, Darwish had never given any specific Israeli publishing house the sole rights to publish his works. Inasmuch as this first public debate revolving around the publication of "Those Who Pass within Fleeting Words" testifies to Darwish's presence and importance within Israeli discourse, it especially emphasizes Darwish's explicit interest in retaining a valued status within Israeli discourse as a necessary means to gain the support of the Western community. The second public debate which I will now briefly explore will shed light upon the motivations of Israeli society and culture in affording Darwish such a place.

297 Al-Osta, "Thalath Awraq wa-Aukhra Rabī‘ah".

298 The sentence had been originally written by Darwish in one of his published letters to his fellow poet Samish al-Qasim, eventually published in book form in al-Rasa‘il [The Letters].

299 Kayyal, Targum be-Tsel ha-‘Imut, 257-258.
The Second Debate: Introducing Darwish's Poetry into the Jewish-Israeli High School Literature Curriculum

In March 2000, Yossi Sarid, then Minister of Education in the Israeli government, decided to incorporate into the new high-school literature curriculum a unit called: "Poems by Palestinian Poets", and chiefly "the poet of the struggle, Mahmoud Darwish". His decision caused a public storm and led to a motion of no-confidence by the Knesset. The motion was eventually revoked, but Darwish's poems were incorporated only into the curricula of the optional poetry section within the Israeli Bagrut (the final high-school matriculation exam). What then, had been the causes of such a fierce opposition, so as to justify a dramatic motion of no-confidence? What was it about studying Darwish's poetry which seemed so utterly threatening to the Israeli parliament?

It is highly illuminating to read the discussions held at the meeting of the Knesset's (the Israeli parliament) Education and Culture Committee on the subject. The starting point of the committee's discussion is of course Sarid's suggestion. It contains four major themes:

1. A discourse pertaining to Palestinian culture and society
2. The readiness of Israeli culture to incorporate elements from the outside, i.e.: to translate into Hebrew.
3. The inner Israeli definition of what is 'political' within cultural contexts.
4. An awareness of the possible reversal in power relations which Darwish's poetry may cause.

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301 Knesset, "Protocol 85".
Although all four topics are of interest, I will however limit my overview to the second and the fourth topics. The second theme bears a strong relevance to the subject of the chapter: The translations of Darwish's poem into Hebrew, while the fourth topic pertains directly to the ‘secret’ of Darwish's appeal and presence within Israeli cultural and social discourse.

**The readiness of Israeli culture to translate from Arabic**

The historian, Michel Abitbol, chair of the Department of African Studies at the Hebrew University, one of the committee's external invitees, frames the discussion within the context of a multi-cultural reality. He makes a distinction between countries which "imprison poets and poetry" and between "countries such as England, which don't ban from the school curricula works of James Joyce, though he was an Irish Catholic, or France which never banned works by Kant nor Goethe or any other German philosopher during periods of war".  

Similarly, the labor party Knesset member, Kolet Avital, viewes the study of Darwish's poems as testifying to the aptitude of broadening children's horizons toward getting to know the other side, qualifying Israel's current cultural/educational approach as a "ghetto" approach.

A more pessimistic position as to the prospects of currently studying and reading Darwish in Israel, is introduced by Knesset members Uri Savir, from the Merkaz party (the center party) and by the Israeli Palestinian Knesset member from the Balad (National Democratic Assembly) party, Azmi Bishara. While Savir points out the current immaturity of Israeli society to engage

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302 Knesset, "Protocol 85", 12, my translation, following, all translations from the protocol are my own.

303 Knesset, "Protocol 85".
with Darwish's poetry, Bishara reinforces his stand, opposing the division promoted by the Israeli ministry of Education in which:

They cut him (that is, Darwish) to pieces, saying we will teach only the human part in him, not the political part in him. Isn’t a poem political? Even a love poem is political. Political poetry isn't poetical? All of these divisions…I prefer that instead of dissecting him to pieces, you don't teach him at all.304

Interestingly, somewhere in between the position that advocates for the incorporation of the poems and the one which opposes it for being premature, we find the naïve position of Koren Stanzko, a ninth grade high-school student from the city of Bat-Yam. She articulates, in the name of openness and cultural willingness, a position that not only encourages the study of Darwish's poem, but moreover views them as a means to the construction of future peace:

There is another reason why we should incorporate Darwish into the curriculum. We are their neighbors, and actually we don't know what they feel toward us. All of the literature which we study is from a Jewish perspective and what [the Jews] think of the Arabs. We still haven't learned anything from which we might know how the Arab feels toward us, and this could connect us, this could be one of the bridges that exist in order for us to get to know each other.305

Noticeably, Stanzko’s discourse varies greatly from the discourse of the parliament members. First it is devoid of any sense of anxiety. On the contrary, she views the possibility of studying

Darwish’s poems not as a threat, but as a possible bridge toward a mutual acquaintance. If the semantic field of the parliament members revolves around segregation and power relations (“ghetto”, “immaturity”), then Stanzko’s stance centers around a healthy sense of curiosity. Thus, she also points out very clearly and simply a fact overlooked by the previous members, namely, the acute asymmetry pertaining to the nearly non-existent representation of Arabs/Palestinians. What then separates the naïve, hopeful, curious position toward Darwish of high school student Stanzko from the overprotective, anxious stance of most Israeli parliament members? The answer, as I shall further elaborate concerns the deep meaning of Darwish’s presence in relation to the essence of Zionist existence.

**When in Doubt: Being Conscious of Darwish's Explosive Potential to Undermine the Current Power Relations**

While the previous topic touched upon the possibility or impossibility of actually engaging Darwish's poetry, the current topic exposes the deeper causes which lie behind the anxious, almost hysterical attitude prevailing toward Darwish's poetry. This is how Robi Rivlin, today Israel's president, and at the time a Knesset member of the Likud party, describes the tension:

I am truly serious when I say that we are still in a situation where there are questions and doubts regarding whether the Zionist movement and the state of Israel as its result, is a truly moral movement, or have we really actually done something harmful toward another people, coming here as imperialists and settling, coming here colonizing and occupying another people. Are we in a situation where we should study these same
subjects, which have turned to be something in the likelihood of hatred toward the state of Israel and toward its character as a Jewish state.\textsuperscript{306}

In his remarks, Rivlin explores the inner moral doubt, that very inner anxiety fueled by Darwish's poetry. Rivlin understands that legitimizing and reaffirming the cultural capital presented by Darwish's poetry potentially entails an undermining of the whole Hebrew Zionist hegemonic perception, as it challenges its mechanism of self-justification.

Similarly, Israeli-Palestinian Knesset member Bishara notices that the very debate and the motion of no-confidence are a testimony to the inner weakness of the hegemonic Israeli position:

\begin{quote}
The problem is that you start bringing out, just like magicians, ‘the Holocaust’, ‘the rock of our existence’, ‘history’, we were persecuted and they want to kill us, and all of this for whom? All of this is happening to you because of a single poem? I claim that the fact there is a plurality of opinions in Israel is a sign of Israel’s strength, and it means that the Zionist project succeeded, it is a sign of self-confidence. However, having your whole sense of self-confidence undermined by a single poem? Everything is undermined because of one poem? What is wrong with you?\textsuperscript{307}
\end{quote}

Undoubtedly, both Bishara and Rivlin help us to better understand the reasons underlying the anxiety around the introduction of Darwish's Poetry into Jewish-Israeli high school literature. However, before moving to the see how these anxieties are reflected in the various translations of "Identity Card" to Hebrew, I would like to proceed yet another step in contextualizing Darwish's

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{306} Knesset, "Protocol 85", 7.
\item \textsuperscript{307} Knesset, "Protocol 85", 15.
\end{footnotes}
appeal to Israeli discourse. Using Homi Bhabha's theory, I put forward the claim that Darwish should not be viewed as an external threat to the colonial order, but rather as one of the very characteristics of the colonial condition. Darwish's consistent presence within Israeli cultural discourse should be understood to be a part of what Bhabha had coined “colonial ambivalence”, while his presence should be viewed as the embodiment of what Bhabha named: “the colonial hybrid”.308

Homi Bhabha’s Colonial Theory: Darwish as a Palestinian Hybrid

In his seminal 1994 book The Location of Culture, Bhabha solidifies his fundamental theoretical approach through the exploration of cultural and literary production within various colonial settings. Whereas two of the most prominent scholars of classical colonial theory, Fanon and Said, were concerned with the ways in which colonial mechanisms and violence affect both the psychology of the native (Fanon) and the perception of the Orient (Said), Bhabha performed a deconstruction of the colonial subject in order to demonstrate how the very structure of colonialism is embedded with an ambivalence and characterized by a profound lack of self-confidence.

Bhabha points out the manner in which colonial language discloses time and again the colonizer’s basic sense of estrangement toward the space he is occupying, as well as the failure of colonial desire to wholly implement its imperialistic world view. By underlining the inner weakness of the colonial position, Bhabha creates new possibilities of reading the colonial situation, not just as an encounter between the ‘strong’ colonizer and the ‘weak’ colonized, but

308 Bhabha, Location, 162-166.
rather as an encounter of two cultures, in which self-perception and the perception of the other is transformed by the colonial moment:

The currency of critical comparativism, or aesthetic judgement is no longer the sovereignty of the national culture conceived as Benedict Anderson proposes as an 'imagined community' rooted in a 'homogeneous empty time' of modernity and progress. The great connective narratives of capitalism and class drive the engines of social reproduction, but do not, in themselves, provide a foundational frame for those modes of cultural identification and political affect that form around issues of sexuality, race, feminism, the lifeworld of refugees or migrants, or the deathly social destiny of AIDS.  

Put differently, reading Hebrew literature as a purely homogenic national site of literary production is simply not possible, since its colonial encounter defines its very constitution, and it is only through its understanding within the colonial condition that it may be fully accounted for.

One of Bhabha’s central concepts is the ‘colonial hybrid’. To understand the manner in which Bhabha construes the presence of this hybrid, we must first explore his analysis of the way in which colonial authority is established in general. For Bhabha, colonial power and authority are always dependent upon mechanisms of repression and denial, since the intrinsic formation of colonialist rule involves a doubling:

To be the father and the oppressor; just and unjust; moderate and rapacious; vigorous and despotic: these instances of contradictory belief, doubly inscribed in the deferred

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309 Bhabha, Location, 8.
address of colonial discourse, raise questions about the symbolic space of colonial authority. What is the image of authority if it is civility's supplement and democracy's despotic double? How is it exercised if, as Macaulay suggests, it must be read between the lines, within the interdictory borders of civility itself?310

Colonial rule, thus, denies the fundamental linguistic and cultural ‘otherness’ of the natives, while repressing the very fact of systematically destroying it. These psychological mechanisms are complemented by the colonial demand (which Bhabha demonstrates from a variety of colonial settings) for the infinite, uninterrupted existence of the historic imperialist narrative, a narrative that shouldn’t be contaminated by any kind of difference or otherness. In this context, Bhabha cites Said in relation to Palestine: “Or the contemporary Zionist myth of the neglect of Palestine - 'of a whole territory', Said writes, 'essentially unused, unappreciated, misunderstood… to be made useful, appreciated, understandable.'”311

The emergence of the colonial hybrid is, according to Bhabha, the inevitable ghostly return of the denied otherness upon which colonial rule constructed its own identity. In its appearance, the hybrid testifies to the failure of that denial and repression, which are now confronted anew with the embodied form of a mutated hybrid. The failure of colonial desire to produce a pure, homogeneous system of identity is embodied and articulated by the very essence of the hybrid. By his resisting presence, he thus testifies to the contradiction between his subordination to the

310 Bhabha, Location, 95.
311 Bhabha, Location, 165.
discriminatory nature of the colonial system, and that very system’s inability to represent him, his culture and his language.\footnote{Bhabha, \emph{Location}, 165-166.}

Further, Bhabha defines the hybrid as a signifier which destabilizes the colonial symbol. Since the hybrid embodies the totality of repressed otherness, and since colonial rule attempts to present itself as a holistic, coherent, symbolic system, then its whole symbolic validity is disrupted by the presence of the dislocated hybrid. Thus, the hybrid is turned into a hideous, anxiety-provoking signifier, produced by paranoid mechanisms of classification. Coming full circle back to Darwish we observe how his hybridity corresponds to Bhabha’s model. His reoccurring presence within Israeli cultural discourse might be understood as nothing less than the return of the repressed colonial violence, initially inflicted by Zionist rule. His presence disrupts and undermines the wholesome nature of Zionist desire, proving the impossibility of its utopian fantasy, calling it to account for its primal contradictions and for the violence of its foundational moment.

Bhabha’s theory accounts also for the unproportioned, excessive response toward the idea of incorporating Darwish’s poems into Israeli high school curricula. For if Darwish becomes a signifier indicating the fragile, problematic, unethical and un-whole nature of the Zionist symbolic system; if Darwish's presence is a necessitated return of the repressed and denied trauma of the native's historical, lingual and cultural dislocation by Zionist rule, then reacting anxiously and treating his poetry as a real threat to one's own symbolic order is more than justified. The secret of its appeal, however, is deeper than that, since his presence no less informs
Jewish Israelis of their own identity, revealing to them something about their moment of becoming colonial. It is their own repressed truth about what they have become, and inadvertently about who they were before, or who they still might be able to be, that the presence of Darwish, as a Palestinian hybrid evokes. Now that Darwish's status as a colonial hybrid within the Israeli cultural sphere has been established, we may proceed to the examination of "Identity Card's" translations into Hebrew.

The Haunting Return of the Colonial Hybrid: Avraham Yinon's Early 'Security' Translation (1965)

Between the First and the Second Publications of the Translation

Avraham Yinon was the first to translate "Identity Card" into Hebrew, and his work presents us with a perfect example of the way in which Bhabha's theory of the colonial hybrid may be initially applied to Darwish's case. The poem had been published by Yinon in volume 15 of the periodical Ha-Mizrah ha-Hadash (The New East) among other poems and short stories by Palestinian writers, all translated by Yinon. According to Amit-Kochavi, the translation of the poem had been originally commissioned earlier by Israel's security agency. It seems more than plausible, therefore, that Yinon had already translated the poem much earlier than 1965, the year in which he officially published it.

This possibility is further supported by the fact that the 1965 translation is accompanied by a footnote, stating that the translation is of the original version of the poem, which was first published by Darwish in volume 7 of al-Jadid journal in 1963. The poem, the very footnote

313 Yinon, "Kama Nusei Moked", 57-84.
314 Amit-Kochavi, Turgumei, 275.
continues, was later published, with certain alterations in his first collection of poems, *Olive Leaves*, published in Haifa in 1964. Since the publication in *The New East* journal was in 1965, it would make little sense to translate from Darwish's original version, knowing that Darwish had authorized an updated version for the collection, unless of course, Yinon was using an earlier translation that he had already completed.

Accordingly, the first ever translation of "Identity Card" was not a result of cultural curiosity but rather of the view that the poem presented a threat to Israel's security. Darwish's poem, as well as other Palestinian poets' poems, had the ability to mobilize the people, and to strengthen national resistance. The poem was therefore treated as a potential weapon, not as a literary-aesthetic object, and its translation initially emerged into Hebrew textuality as a classified military document. It was only two years later, in 1965, that Yinon reasserted the poem's translation, this time within a specific cultural setting, namely, the journal of the Israel Oriental Society: *The New East*.

These two consecutive appearances of Yinon's translation correspond to the double standard intrinsic to colonial rule according to Bhabha’s account, and to the initial presence of Darwish as a colonial hybrid. The first, 'security oriented' translation documents the actual formative moment in which colonial violence attempts to monitor and oppress the very cultural expression of the native's resistance, while the second, belated appearance, presents us already with its ghostly return as a hybrid text, occupying a cultural space within the colonizer's controlled literary field. Just as the initial trauma of dislocating the other is repressed and remains

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315 Darwish, Mahmoud, *Awraq*.

unspoken, so the initial translation of the poem, as a raw articulation of that forbidden traumatic moment, remains hidden, classified, un-published. Thus, the belated appearance of the very same first translation returns to haunt Israeli culture as the symbolic manifestation of the native's initial dislocation.

Locating the Translation: The Social Context of The New East and Yinon as a Cultural Agent

Yinon's doubly located translation raises the question of his own role as a cultural agent. The cultural ideology of The New East quarterly and of some of Yinon's writings within it reveal an affinity that exists between the Oriental research of the Palestinian 'cultural/literary' field and the discourse of 'security' and monitoring.\(^{317}\) Indeed, upon delving into the social context in which the translation of the poem appears, one discovers the clear similarity of the military discourse to the literary discourse of the Oriental Israeli Society (The New East being the society's periodical).

There has been quite significant scholarship exploring and critiquing the Orientalist discourse within Zionist ideology. Some of this scholarship includes Shohat who was the first to stress the importance of the Orientalist perspective in Zionist ideology toward both Palestinians and Mizrahi Jews.\(^{318}\) She has also explored the adaptation and identification of the Israeli-Zionist discourse with Eurocentric schools of thought. Piterberg examined the Orientalist dimension

\(^{317}\) Yonatan Mendel's, The Creation of Israeli Arabic: Political and Security Considerations in the Making of Arabic Language Studies in Israel presents us with the first account of how profoundly Israel's security approach and its culture of militarism have shaped the actual study of Arabic language in Israel. Although an abundance of research on the subject of Israeli Orientalism exists, the manner in which Orientalism and a security-oriented approach toward Palestinians and Arabs has shaped the study of Arabic and Palestinian literature is scarce.

\(^{318}\) Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel", 1-35.
which informs the shaping of historical consciousness and history studies in Israel, while Ben-Amos had written about the way it shaped the study of Jewish-Arabic history.\textsuperscript{319} More recently Khazzoom contextualized Israeli Oriental discourse as heavily influenced by the history of East European Jews as Orientalized subjects themselves.\textsuperscript{320} Lastly, Goodman and Loss (2009) discuss the way in which early discursive practices of Israeli anthropologists during the 1950-1960 in Israel, ambivalently re-configure the ethnic difference between themselves as European Jews, and the Mizrahi Jew, who appears as both brother and Other, embodying a set of contradictory characteristics.\textsuperscript{321}

Returning to our own context, it will suffice us to examine the opening remarks of the president of the Oriental Israeli Society at the time, Shelomo Dov Goitein, within the very first issue of \textit{The New East} which was published in 1949, in order to discover how his assumptions echo Said's classical description of the Orientalist gaze.\textsuperscript{322} Goitein's remarks sketch both the general objectives of the newly founded society, and its newly established quarterly. He starts off with a hyperbolic praise to the establishment of the state of Israel which:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{dramatically ended a process of multi-transformation of political revival - a process that encompassed the eastern lands of Egypt, India, Turkey and Yemen through a}\n\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{319} Piterberg, "Domestic orientalism", 125-146; Ben-Amos, "An impossible pluralism?", 41-51.

\textsuperscript{320} Khazzoom, “The Great Chain of Orientalism”, 481-510.

\textsuperscript{321} Goodman and Loss, “The Other as Brother”, 477-508.

\textsuperscript{322} Goitein, "Ha-Mizrah ha-Hadash", 1-2.
whole generation. The stage had been prepared for a development whose scope cannot be assumed. But are the participants in the play willing to play their role properly?\(^{323}\)

The patronizing tone accompanied by a hint of uncertainty – as to whether the other Arab countries will "properly play their role", and participate in this "incredible" (Western) project of development, epitomized by the supremacy of the modern Zionist country – accurately correspond with Said's description of the Western fantasy to save a primitive East.\(^{324}\)

Goitein, thereafter continues, elaborating his fantasy of redemption and exploitation: "poverty and degeneration are to be found today over the whole of this East, but unfathomable treasures await beneath its soil, expecting the diligent hand, that will dig them up and benefit the people".\(^{325}\) Goitein of course permits himself to speak for these subaltern Orientals, and to describe for them what their task should be. They need reclaim the natural treasures of their own countries, but in order to do so, they first need to undergo "a profound change".\(^{326}\)

Moreover, the image of the East as the femininized other to be taken over is reenacted in Goitein's eroticized imagery of it. He goes on to compare the East to "a young vibrant lad, who's local heritage and foreign influences are mixed, so the 'new east' is not yet sure of its own nature, and has not solidified its spirit by writing literary works that will enable a stranger to easily

\(^{323}\) Goitein, "Ha-Mizrah ha-Hadash", 1.

\(^{324}\) Said, Orientalism. I am especially thinking here of the first chapter in the book, which deals with the concepts of knowledge and power.

\(^{325}\) Goitein,"Ha-Mizrah ha-Hadash", 2.

\(^{326}\) Reading Gotiein today seems almost anachronistic, his words seem like a text book description of everything which had been critiqued as shameful in colonial desire.
penetrate it”. This difficulty in penetrating the East and know it: "only enhances the desire to experiment in that knowing".327

What then is the function of the quarterly periodical in this Orientalist scheme of the society? Well, it is simply to "provide current and reliable information of what takes place and of what is being formed in the countries of the East, and especially in the countries of the Middle-East".328 This reliable information, Goitein continues, is meant to become a 'reliable' tool in the hands of the Hebrew reader, one that will assist him in his daily work.329 It would seem then that the goal of the quarterly is to make the knowledge of the Oriental other as accessible as possible for the common Hebrew reader, for he is to take part in the great mission of the exploration and the re-education of the 'Oriental native'. Thus, it is meant to provide him with a kind of factual road map designed to assist him in navigating his way, in his daily transactions with the natives. If this though is the role of the quarterly's articles, what about the role of translated literature? This, Goitein shortly proclaims, will be relevant at a later stage. Once a broader picture is established, translated literature will also be presented, enabling the Hebrew reader to view the 'eastern world', through the lens of its own writers.

Now that we've established the general socio-cultural context in which the first translation of “Identity Card” appeared, we might proceed to investigate Yinon's own agency within this context. Yinon did not limit himself solely to the translation of Palestinian prose and poetry of

329 Although this is an obscure statement, Goitein might have in mind the daily transactions which Israeli Jews conduct with Palestinians, be it in the fields of commerce, agriculture etc.
the period, and he accompanied his translations with a twenty-seven-page long article surveying these works, titled, "Some Focal Topics within the Literature of the Arabs of Israel".330

In the small preface to the article, Avraham openly articulates his scholarly agenda. Interestingly, he admits that it is not the literary-aesthetic value of the works which appeals to him, but solely their value as a testimony to the social-political status of the 'Arabs of Israel', viewed from the perspectives of their authors. In other words, these literary works are but a source of information, a form of a literary ethnography, as they provide a condensed reflection in relation to the various attitudes prevailing amongst the "Arabs of Israel". His active role as a cultural agent is not therefore fundamentally different than the one he assumed when he first translated "Identity Card" for the Israeli security services. We might say that these Orientalized translations are but the public expression of the same cultural/political secretive monitoring impulse initiated by the security services.

Yinon's survey seeks to map as many writers as possible, while the organizing principle for the analysis of their works is strictly thematic. The various themes include: The Writer's Calling, The Regime, The Image of the Jewish Settlement, The Image of Israeli Arab, The Land and the Love of the Homeland, The Refugees, and A Longing for a New Life. These are then further divided to sub-themes. Yinon selectively demonstrates the manner in which the opinions of various Palestinian poets and writers toward these themes is reflected in their works.331 The

330 Yinon, "Kama", 57-84. Noticeably the term Arabs of Israel indicates the nomadic status of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation between 1948-1967. While they were granted Israeli citizenship and allowed to vote, they remained under military occupation which was abolished only in 1966. One cannot but be impressed by the quantity of Palestinian writers which Yinon somewhat superficially surveys. Amongst others, these include the poets: Samih al-Kasem, Rashid al-Husein, Mahmoud Darwish, Jamal Kawar, Mahmoud al-Dasoki and many others.

331 Yinon, "Kama", 57-84.
different poems and short stories are therefore presented as devoid of any literary tradition, reduced into informative objects, a textual testimony to be employed in order to better understand and 'know' the opinions of the 'Arabs of Israel'. No distinction between the form of a work and its content is made. In poetry, no discussion of meter, rhyme, or prevailing poetic images and metaphors is offered. In prose, a raw description of the plot is given, while little attention is given to the structures of narrative, or to the stylistic representation of the characters.

What is at stake are the implications of Yinon's literary 'ethnographic' exploration upon the Jewish Israeli readership which consumes them. If a Jewish Israeli Hebrew speaker were to treat these works as ones that afford an actual reflection of real, everyday life, then these works are deprived of any creative and artistic agency. If irony (and its different undertones), plot composition, and above all the analysis of language itself (especially in poetry) are disregarded, then the cultural and historical value and depth of these works is extremely compromised. This utter reduction of Palestinian subjectivity which occurs within these translations into Hebrew shapes the Hebrew reader's imagination as to who this subject actually is, and therefore creates an ahistorical superficial image.

Moreover, no attempt to connect the different writers, and map out any possible literary relationships is made. Yinon's decontextualization of these works echoes Niranjana's claim that in a paradoxical manner within a colonial setting, translation accords the native an existence within the cultural space of the colonizer, but only as a transparent object, devoid of a history.\textsuperscript{332}

The representation of the native is therefore partial and frozen so as not to undermine the basic

\textsuperscript{332} Niranjana, \textit{Siting translation}, 3.
premises upon which the very same colonial rule establishes its authority.⁵³³ Corresponding to Niranjan's theory, Yinon's translation and commentary ignore the broader historic and literary continuities that inform these literary works. By thematically classifying them according to narrow mostly political categories he uproots their vibrant literary status as works which correspond both with the history of modern Arab literature, and with other possible influences and sources. As Niranjana puts it, Yinon affords these works a limited, ahistorical, place within his own cultural space.⁵³⁴

Thus, while Yinon's second publication of "Identity Card" does present us with a transition from the secretive space of security services to the public sphere of a wide spread periodical, the context of its publication remains similar: to map and better understand the native "Orientalized" Palestinian, so that he becomes as manageable as possible. However, ironically, and counter to Yinon's explicit ethnographic desire to reduce the literary into an ethnographic monitoring of the native through translation, the untranslatability of Darwish's protagonist anaphoric demand: "Write it Down, I am an Arab", exposes the impossibility of the Zionist colonial utopia, and points to the limits of its monolingual and monocultural fantasy.

As we shall further observe, the recurring translation and referencing of the poem within Hebrew cultural discourse marks the compulsory return of that which had been repressed at the defining moment of establishing colonial authority, namely the disposition and uprooting of the Palestinian native from his history, language and culture. The sense of a doubling and of an inner

ambivalence, which Bhabha views as intrinsic to colonial discourse, is embodied through the ongoing, recurring negotiations around the translation of Darwish's poem into Hebrew.

Cannibalizing the Occupier: Miri Regev's Paranoid Misreading of "Identity Card" and Reuven Snir's Sublimizing Translation

Hebrew literary and public discourse had great difficulty in coming to terms with the closing lines of "Identity Card", those which address not the self-assertion and the (phantasmal) construction of the Palestinian "I", but rather the relationship of that self with its oppressor. In the last stanza of the poem the speaker moves from his own self-portrait to a description of the atrocities brought upon him by the occupier:

Write it down:
I am an Arab
Robbed of my ancestors’ vineyards
And of the land cultivated
By me and all my children.
Nothing is left for us and my grandchildren
Except these rocks…
Will your government take them too, as reported?335

335 Darwish, "Identity Card".

336 Darwish, Diwan, 74.
The description then climaxes into a futuristic warning in which the vengeful native, in a cannibalistic image threatens to eat the flesh of his violator/rapist (mughtasib):

| Therefore, Write at the top of page one: I do not hate people, I do not assault anyone, But…if I get hungry, I eat the flesh of my usurper. Beware…beware…of my hunger, And of my anger! |
|---|---|
| إذن سجل برأس الصفحة الأولى أنا لا أكره الناس ولا أسطو على أحد ولكنني إذا ما جعت أكل لحم مغتصبي حذر حذر من جوعي و من غضبي! |

Just as the anaphoric imperative at the opening of the poem: "Write it down, I am an Arab", undermines the assumption of a possible homogenic settler-colonial Jewish state, so does the closing of the poem undermine and challenge another presupposed notion of settler-colonial Zionism, that of its cultural supremacy. Here, Darwish's hybrid position is extremely important: On the one hand he is marked as being an inferior 'native', whose culture has been deemed as subservient, banned from receiving a place within the new nationalized enlightened Hebrew utopia. On the other hand, his international prestige as a poet, the symbolic status accorded to him by Israeli discourse, and the very fact that he is translated into Hebrew makes him an integral part of this very 'civilized' Hebrew world.

It is Darwish's position within Hebrew discourse as a colonial hybrid which makes the cannibalistic image of "Identity Card's" protagonist so undigestible, for if one accepts this image

337 Darwish, "Identity Card".
338 Darwish, Diwan, 74.
as valid, one must also accept its ethical logic. Cannibalism here appears to be nothing more than a direct, transparent manifestation of resistance countering the very notion of a falsified sense of cultural superiority that excuses the occupier's exploitation and domination of the native Palestinian. Consequently, wholly embracing Darwish's poetic image of the cannibal entails a disavowing and a questioning of the very cultural essence of Zionist colonial discourse.

Miri Regev's Paranoid Translation: Cannibalizing the Jewish People

In 22 of September 2016, Miri Regev, the current Israeli Minister of Sports and Culture attended the Ofir awards prizes ceremony. However, Regev left the ceremony in protest of the joint performance of the Israeli Palestinian rapper and singer Tamer Nafar and the Mizrahi Jewish poet and performer artist Yossi Zabari. Nafar and Zabari's performance presented a vocal collage in Hebrew and in Arabic, the title of which was *Ana Mush Politi* a Hebrew-Arabic mixture of the sentence: 'I am not political'. The performance began with Nafar's own mix of Arabic and Hebrew rap, then, as a sound track of Darwish's voice reading the beginning of "Identity Card" was played in the background, Zabari entered the stage, standing beside the now silent Nafar, and simultaneously translating into Hebrew the opening lines from Darwish's poem. This prepared the stage for Zabari's own Hebrew poem, a takeoff on Darwish's celebrated poem, opening with the words: "Write it down, I too, am an Arab", and describing his own Mizrahi odyssey toward self-definition. Finally, Nafar and Zabari concluded their performance with a joint bilingual Hebrew-Arabic reading of a later poem by Darwish (translated into Hebrew by

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339 The Ofir awards are considered the Israeli Oscars. They are awarded by the Israeli Academy of Film and Television in recognition of excellence of professionals in the film industry of Israel.
Muhammad Hamzah Ghnaim), titled "Kana Yunqisuna Hadir" (We Lacked a Present), taken from his 1998 collection, *Stranger's Bed*.\(^{340}\)

Following the performance, Regev returned to the ceremony to carry out her speech, in which she explained why she had left in protest during the performance, stating:

I would like, before proceeding to the speech I prepared, to explain why I had left during the ceremony. I have a lot of patience toward the 'other', but I have no tolerance for Darwish, or for anyone who desires to wipe out the Israeli people. In regards to the opening of the poem: 'write it down, I am an Arab' I actually have no objection, of course we all agree, but at the end of the poem, which states: 'I eat the flesh of all of us, of the Jewish people', to that neither I nor you should agree. With all respect to you (i.e.: to the audience).\(^{341}\)

The comments made by Regev were not, as she herself testified, part of her 'prepared speech', so that we may refer to them as a spontaneous response intended to explain her protest. Thus, her (mis)translation of Darwish's poem was probably based upon some previous acquaintance with the entire work. Moreover, since the part of the poem actually referenced in the performance were its opening lines, then Regev, by commenting on the poem's closing lines, clearly demonstrated her knowledge of the poem's poetic narrative.\(^{342}\)

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\(^{340}\) Darwish, *Sarir al-Gharibah*. For the full ceremony, including Nafar's and Zabari's performance see: Nafar and Zabari, "Joint Performance".

\(^{341}\) Regev, Miri, "Excerpts from Speech".

\(^{342}\) This in fact, had not been the only incident in which Regev protested the performance of Darwish's poetry. Less than two years ago (12/6/2017), Regev left the ACUM awards ceremony in protest, after the Israeli Palestinian singer Mirah Awad performed one of Darwish's poems during the ceremony.
What may we learn by exploring Regev’s performative translation? Firstly, she seems to accept the fundamental anaphoric appeal of the speaker: 'Write it Down, I am an Arab'. Moreover, she deems this sentence agreeable not only to herself, but to her audience too (“I think we all agree”). The sentence, then, is expropriated from its original historic Palestinian anti-colonial context and implemented by Regev in the context of Arab-Israeli rights to a cultural self-expression, within a settler-colonial setting.343

Hence, her agreement with the sentence corresponds to the difference between the preliminary colonizer-colonized phase of settler-colonialism and its final stage, in which this distinction is abolished, as the colonizer indigenizes himself. As Veracini tells us:

> The prospect of integration/assimilation, and the rhetorical claim that indigenous individuals can participate in the political life of the settler polity, are among the most powerful tools available for consolidating settler colonial projects. Indeed, settler colonialism is at its strongest when it can speak in universalizing terms, when it can claim to be ‘closing the gaps’. This has been the case within Israel proper, where the Arabs constitute a minority.344

Regev then decontextualizes the translation of the reoccurring anaphoric line whose haunting return is inscribed upon the body of Zionist settler-colonialism, disrupting its ‘white’, Eurocentric, non-Arabic utopian vision, so that she may wholeheartedly embrace it. This

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343 One may also attribute further meaning to this acceptance and locate it within Mizrahi discourse, in that Regev (herself of mixed Moroccan-Spanish descent) is implying that the Arab identity of Mizrahi Jews should also be openly recognized.

344 Veracini, “The Other”, 30.
acceptance however, changes once faced with the ethical rage introduced by Darwish's speaker, through the cannibalistic image of the oppressed taking vengeance of his oppressor. Here, Regev produces a (mis)translation, which seeks to avoid the specific historical logic, in which this possible cannibalistic act is to take place, imagining instead of it a desire to: "eat the flesh of all of us, of the Jewish people".

This (mis)translation actually reverses the original intended meaning, as it substitutes the victim and the victimized. Not only does Darwish's original poem refrain from any reference to the Jewish people, it further explicitly defines its object of vengeance by its oppressing relation to the speaker, qualifying him universally to be: "my oppressor". By the decontextualization of the cannibalistic vengeance from its specific colonial context, and by replacing Darwish's "oppressor" with the whole of the "Jewish people", Regev taps into the semantic field of general Jewish persecution and to the rhetoric of Jewish paranoia. Thus, the inner logic of Darwish's poetic cannibalism as the result of colonial resistance is delegitimized, and made into a monstrous practice designed to annihilate the whole of the Jewish people.

Darwish's status as a colonial hybrid is perfectly exemplified in Regev's disproportionate, hysterical reactional translation. While she is more than willing to accept (and therefore to accurately translate) his call for the assertion of Arabic identity (defending the cultural rights of the Arab, not 'Palestinian', minority within the settler-colonial Jewish state), she is unequivocally

345 The Arabic word mughtasabi may be understood as oppressor or rapist.

346 Additionally, in her choice to replace Darwish's original intended oppressor with the Jewish people, Regev appropriates for herself the right to speak for diasporic Jews as well, turning them into the possible future victims of Darwish's vengeance. On the construction of the diasporic Jewish self, as characterized by attributes such as self-guilt, paranoia and hysteria through an analysis of fiction, film, memoir and psychoanalysis see: Baum, Feeling Jewish, 152-190.
unwilling to negotiate the basic oppressive power relations upon which this identity is constructed. It is precisely the hyperbolic manner in which Regev (mis)translates the closing lines of Darwish's poem which discloses the anxious relationship of the Zionist settler-colonial project, and its mechanisms of denial toward its initial colonial oppressive violent moment.

Reuven Snir Sublimation through Translation: Turning the Lahmeh (flesh) into Lehem (bread)

In 2015, the Israeli Jewish Mizrahi scholar of Arabic literature, Reuven Snir, published a book entitled: *Mahmoud Darwish: Fifty Years of Poetry*.347 Snir's intent was to offer the Hebrew reader as broad a view as possible of Darwish's poetic work. The book included a lengthy and detailed introduction, reviewing Darwish's life and poetic development, followed by various translations, set in chronological order, each taken from Darwish's different poetry collections. The single poem selected for translation by Snir from the *Olive Leaves* collection was, unsurprisingly, “Identity Card.”348

Snir's symbolic capital, as I shall further elaborate, enables him to hold a powerful position as a translator of Palestinian literature into Hebrew. Unlike Regev, one may not supposedly suspect Snir of any bias, or fear of the Arab 'other'. If anything, the opposite holds true: his prolific body of scholarly work has been devoted to the exploration of both Arab, Palestinian and Mizrahi

347 Darwish, *Hamishim*. This had been the first attempt at creating a broad overview of Darwish’s complete body of work in Hebrew. Though Darwish is the most translated Arab writer into Hebrew, notwithstanding Peretz-Banai’s 1995 pioneering book *Me-Ver le-Zhokhit ha-He’adrut [Beyond the Absence Glass]*, which consisted of poems from a variety of Darwish’s early collections, all other translations concentrated on a specific collection.

348 Within the introduction, Snir devotes almost two pages (75-76) to the discussion of the poem, especially to its essentialist conception of identity.
literature, including several articles on Darwish himself. Moreover, Snir has also explicitly dealt with the subject of Zionist colonialism and the oppression of Jewish-Arabs. The main claim in his book ‘Arviut, Yahadut, Tsiyonut is that both Zionism and Arab nationalism performed a similar cleansing of Arab-Jewish culture, excluding the hybridity of a possible Arab-Jewish subjectivity, while highlighting instead both a “pure”, monolingual Jewish-Zionist identity and a similarly pure Muslim-Arab identity. An expert on both Darwish and on modern Arabic poetry in general, Snir might also be exempted from any suspicion of a lack of translational proficiency, keeping in mind that while it is true that he is more a scholar than a translator, he was awarded the Tchernichovsky Prize for exemplary translations in 2014.

However, Snir's anti-colonial stance is not as unequivocal as it seems. In fact, during the early 1990's, Snir was involved in a dispute, which culminated in his accusation by the Israeli Palestinian writer, Anton Shammas, which entitled him "another military governor". The accusation appeared in the context of a heated scholarly debate held between Hebrew literature scholar, Hannan Hever and Snir within the Hebrew literary periodical Alpaim. Hever had put forward the view that the phenomena of Israeli Palestinians (citizens of Israel) which write in Hebrew (amongst them Anton Shammas and the poet Naim Araide) undermines the fundamental norm prevailing in Hebrew literature, in which there is a correlation between the ethnic Jewish identity of the writer and the fact that he writes in Hebrew. He argued that in

349 An article of Snir even appeared in the collection of essays Mahmoud Darwish: Exile’s Poet (123-166) in which Arabic literature scholars from around the world made contributions discussing Darwish's work.

350 The Tchernichovskky prize is awarded by the municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo to individuals for exemplary works of translation into Hebrew.

351 Shammas, “‘Od Moshel Tsveai”, ?. The article appeared in Kol- Ha-‘Ir newspaper somewhere during the second half of 1990. Since I had been unable to locate the original article, Shammas had sent me his own original draft.
violating this correlation, these writers, from their position as a minority, were challenging the very defining criteria of the majority culture, and were in fact infiltrating the Hebrew literary canon. Following the theory of Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze Hever characterized these writers as preforming a deterritorialization of the Hebrew language.

Snir was quick to reply, and in the next volume of the periodical he argued against Hever's theoretical move. Firstly, he claimed, the phenomena described by Hever was extremely marginal, as it pertained to a very small number of writers. Moreover, these few writers were motivated to write in Hebrew, not by their desire to undermine and critique the current ideology of modern Hebrew literature, but rather because of their inability to succeed in the field of Palestinian and Arab literature. Hence, these writers realized they had more to gain by writing in Hebrew than in Arabic. More profoundly, Snir challenged Hever's distinction between Israeli Palestinians writers and all other Palestinian writers (that is, those living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and elsewhere in exile). Historically, he claimed, the sole literary frame of reference for Palestinian writers is and had always been the realm of Palestinian and Arab literature. Thus, irrespective to whether they were Israeli citizens, the vast majority of Palestinian writers and poets had not the faintest interest in Hebrew literature.

353 Guattari and Deleuze, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*; For an elaborated discussion of Hever's position, and especially for his analysis of Shammas's and Habibi's work see p. 150-1 of this dissertation.
354 Snir, "Peza' Ekhad mi-Peza'v", 244-268.
355 Snir, "Peza' Ekhad mi-Peza'v", 244-250.
Anton Shammas, the Israeli-Palestinian writer and one of the central figures in Hever's theory, provided his own sharp response to Snir's argument.\(^{357}\) In a newspaper article entitled: "Another Military Ruler" he critiqued Snir for denying those Israeli Palestinian writers who desired to do so, the right of partaking in the Hebrew literary field. Snir, so argued Shammas, is conservatively insisting on a discourse of ethnic authenticity, while forgetting the larger, global picture in which other natives in postcolonial settings, such as North Africa or India were desiring, amongst other things, to influence and partake in a critiquing discourse of their oppressive majority cultures. Thus, Snir had been portrayed by both Shammas and Hever as a new 'military ruler' who monopolizes the authentic responses of 'his' Palestinian writers, so as to fit his own rigid definitions.\(^{358}\)

The object of reviewing Snir and Hever's debate from the 1990's is not to portray Snir as an adversary of Palestinian subjectivity, nor to unequivocally present him as an oppressor of the native culture. Rather, it aims to complicate our perception of Snir, and to locate his translation of Darwish's poem within the parameters of Bhabha's "colonial ambivalence", and of Snir's own colonial desire. As we turn now to read Snir's (mis)translation of *Identity Card*, we may explore the extent and the manner in which he is 'gate-keeping' the Jewish-Israeli majority culture.

While Regev's translation decontextualizes Darwish's cannibalistic image, turning it into a hyperbolic all-encompassing fear of the 'barbaric' Arab, and ignoring its specific anti-colonial tone, Snir rather dismantles its very cannibalistic essence, as he substitutes the word flesh, *lahmeh* in Arabic, for the Hebrew phrase *pat lehem*, a loaf or a slice of bread. Thus, Snir renders

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\(^{357}\) Shammas, "ʻOd Moshel Tsvaei".

\(^{358}\) Shammas, "ʻOd Moshel Tsvaei".
Darwish's closing lines as following: "I don't hate the people / And don't steal from anyone / But if I get hungry / I will eat the loaf of bread of the robber / Beware, beware of my hunger / And anger." Snir's overt anti-colonial stance and his deep and intimate knowledge of Darwish, emphasize the uncanny nature of his translational error. Moreover, the fact that such an error occurs in such a central and sensitive text makes it worthy of our attention, and at any rate, our bewilderment requires us to at least explore the nature and possible reasons for this awkward substitution, this “slip of the pen”.

Before delving into the possible causes behind this translational error, it is essential to consider the linguistic affinity binding the two words substituted. Indeed, this lingual affinity is no doubt part of what lured Snir to (mis)translate the words. To be sure, not only do the Arabic lahme (meaning meat, or flesh) and the Hebrew lehem (meaning bread) carry a strong phonetic resemblance, they likewise share a common historic etymology. In the Bible, while the word lehem usually denotes bread, there are certain instances where it is also understood to connote meat. The common anthropological assumption to account for this resemblance is that in both Semitic languages the word was used to connate the basic food ingredient. Since the first Hebrews developed an agriculturally oriented culture, while the first Bedouin Arabs tribes established a nomadic culture, the word lehem came to mean bread for the first, while the word lahme acquired the meaning of meat for the latter.

359 Darwish, Hamishim, 167, my translation.

360 In a correspondence I held with Snir he defined his mistake as a "slip of the pen", unrelated to any translational ideology or any other kind of ideology. Snir referred me to the second and third editions of the book in which the error was corrected. It is though precisely its uncanny presence as an error, which justifies its discussion here.

361 Yet another linguistic remnant of this initial resemblance is found in the verb lahama in Arabic and the verb hilhim in Hebrew, which both mean to weld.
The possible interplay of the two similar Semitic languages within the context of a settler-colonial relationship is discussed by Levy. Levy discusses the manner in which translation between Arabic and Hebrew functions in Emil Habibi’s work, both on the level of narrative strategy, and on the level of the meta-text. While the proximity and affinity between Hebrew and Arabic as Semitic languages allows Habibi’s protagonist to apply a playfulness, creating irony and multiple comic misunderstanding on the level of the narrative, it simultaneously undermines the coherence of the master’s language, as it exposes colonial practice. Thus, Habibi’s subversive usage of these ‘close enemies’, these mistranslations, Levy claims, allows him to: "neutralize the discursive power of the master’s language".

What occurs in Snir’s mistranslation, I argue, is that the very same proximity of ‘false friends’ is used, not to undermine “the power of the master’s language”, but rather to reinforce it. In substituting lahmeh for lehem Snir blurs both the difference between the languages, making them one and the same, and this form of ‘making them the same’, allows him to substitute the very flesh of the occupier for a mere loaf of bread. Inadvertently, Snir’s (mis)translation appropriates Darwish’s initial Palestinian and Arab otherness. It assimilates the radical power of the flesh-oriented metaphor, where the hungry oppressed seeks full justice through the fantasy of devouring his oppressor’s flesh, domesticating it instead into the somewhat neutral (undoubtedly bread too is a powerful symbol), ordinary logic of a shared economy, in which the hunger of the occupied will lead him to nothing more than eating his oppressor’s ‘bread’.

363 Levy, "Exchanging Words", 110.
One way to understand Snir’s domestication of Darwish’s cannibalistic image is through Venuti’s theory of the capitalist logic of translation.\textsuperscript{364} Venuti claims that it is through the view of the translator as a transparent agent, that the 'good translation' has come to be viewed as that which is most easily read. The more the translation is smoothly digested by the reader of the target language, the more it is considered to be a good translation. Furthermore, this aesthetic perception dictates an economic and political criterion by which the 'good translation' serves to reaffirm the fundamental values which prevail in the target culture. Venuti further argues that the translator, either consciously or sub-consciously is well aware of his reader’s expectations and attempts to fulfill them.\textsuperscript{365}

In almost all cases the very act of translating Darwish into Hebrew is a subversive act, which aims to undermine the current prevailing settler-colonial power-structure.\textsuperscript{366} Such translation work already positions the translator as an agent of cultural change. However, it is within the actual translations of Darwish's poems that we continue to encounter an inner tension and a recurring ambivalence. On the one hand there is the desire to remain totally loyal to the subversive nature of the source text, while on the other hand, one also desires to reaffirm the prevailing settler-colonial norms, therefore complying with the mainstream expectations of the

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\textsuperscript{364} Venuti, \textit{The Translators Invisibility}, 17-19.
\textsuperscript{365} Venuti, \textit{The Translators Invisibility}, 17-19.
\textsuperscript{366} Silverman, \textit{ʻIkvot ha-Habitus ba-Tirgum}, 25-27.
\end{flushleft}
Such inconsistencies, and inner contradictions are highlighted by the way in which one transfers meaning from the origin (native) language to the target (colonial) language. In the case of Snir, his (mis)translation discloses the desire to soothe the reader's unease. For if the object of the entire book is to make Darwish as accessible as possible for as large as possible a Jewish Israeli readership, then softening the less digestible parts of his poetry would seem plausible. These parts, if left as they were written, undermine the smooth process of translatability into the target language, conflicting with the taste of the mainstream Jewish Israeli customer.

However, if Snir's intention had been to soften Darwish's vengeful ethical stance, this intention must be reflected, not only by the dramatic (mis)translation of *lahmeh*, but also by the subtler way in which the whole image is rendered, for as Lefevere tells us, when he condemns the sole interest of translation studies in focusing upon translational errors:

> This kind of thinking' about translation will give little or no attention to that vast area of the translated text in which mistakes do not occur, usually limiting itself, in that respect, to a few grudging words of praise for a few 'particularly felicitous' phrases. And yet that area can teach us a lot more than an analysis of mistakes ever can. It will, moreover, teach us something not only about translation itself, but also about the way in which literatures interact with one another.\(^{368}\)

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\(^{367}\) Put differently, as long as one operates from within a colonial based structure, no matter how revolutionary the content of his message is, he always remains invested in the symbolic structure of these settler colonial power-relations, a fact that will usually be reflected in practices such as translation.

\(^{368}\) Lefevere, André, "Translation Analysis: beyond the mistake", 60.
So, as we broaden our analysis to include the whole poetic sentence, we find that Snir translates the Arabic word *mughtasabi* into *ha-gazlan*. While *mughtasabi* simultaneously connotes the semantic fields of rape, hostile takeover and dispossession, *ha-gazlan*, is a somewhat archaic word, barely used in modern Hebrew (except for legal uses), connoting solely the meaning of theft: what it specifically lacks is the violent flavor which *mughtasabi* distinctly has. We may notice then, how the rendering of *mughtasabi* as *ha-gazlan* sets the tone for the more dramatic (mis)translation which follows, since *ha-gazlan* belongs to the world of economic injustice, it is more fitting that the hungry oppressed will covet 'only' the oppressor's loaf of bread, while the original *mughtasabi*, implies an action that is more far reaching and violent than 'just' stealing, thus requiring a harsher measure of revenge. Finally, having said all this, we must though consider yet another possible understanding of Snir's (mis)translation. It could be argued, that Snir, rather than confirming to the reader's expectations, by softening the less digestible parts of Darwish's poem, might have been motivated by a desire to 'de-primitivize' the Palestinian in the eyes of Israelis. In this last instance, Snir's lack of literal translation is read as part of his attempt to prevent the text from being misappropriated by (mis)translations in the like that of Miri Regev's and others who perpetuate such views of Palestinians.

**Summary**

The first part of this chapter brought to the forefront Yinon's reoccurring early translations of "Identity Card", emphasizing the compulsive repetition of its encrypted haunting message:

"Write it Down, I am an Arab". A message that refuses to be erased from Israeli discourse, and

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No doubt *mughtasabi* belongs to multiple semantic fields featuring violation, such as rape. For the most part, other Hebrew translators of the poem offered words which embody a sense of violence. Thus Yinon (1965) renders it as *ʻoshek*, a word which approximates the English rapacious, while Chetrit & Irin (2003) simply render it as *kovesh* (occupier).
which keeps on manifesting itself through the repeated translations of "Identity Card". In Regev and Snir's translations, another prominent theme from the poem was highlighted, pertaining not to the assertion of Arabic identity, but to the fundamental, general relationship between the native and the colonialist, and to the native's call for justice. In both translations, the cannibalistic image used by Darwish – in order to emphasize the native's otherness in face of colonialist hypocritical 'civil' injustice – resisted a simple translatability and was distorted. Be it Regev's hyperbolic paranoia, which decontextualizes the image from its specific colonial context, appropriating it to the discourse of Jewish victimhood, or Snir's domesticating sublimation, in which he turns the 'occupier's flesh' into the 'bread of the thief', setting the poem's logic within the libidinal exchange of economic injustice. In both cases the translator's desire had been the transformation of the image into something more digestible.

By contextualizing and examining these three forms of translations, we have attempted to draw attention to the strong link established in Israeli discourse between Darwish and his early, essentialist poem "Identity Card". We may now conclude that the poem's appeal has less to do with Darwish himself, and more to do with some of the most fundamental questions still hovering, unresolved within the cultural-political sphere of settler-colonial Israel. Darwish's presence as a colonial hybrid is inherent to the incomplete nature of the settler-colonial utopia, marking the failure of its suggested purity. His essentialist poem embodies and gives voice to two of the most challenging assumptions which underlie the very establishment of the Hebrew state: The first is the exclusion of Arabness from the imagined utopian Eurocentric space, and the second is the repressed and often denied fundamental violence of occupying and displacing the natives from their own land. Hence the obsessive return of "Identity Card", its persisting translations as well as their inconsistencies and fallacies. The uncanny nature of these
translations reverberates within the space of Israeli discourse echoing the initial, haunting repressed trauma of denying the other his cultural and historical identity.
Chapter 4: Impossibly Arab, Impossibly Jewish: Mahmoud Darwish as a Signifier of Unattainable Desire in Sami Shalom-Chetrit's "A Mural with no Wall"

In her 2009 article, "Reorienting Hebrew Literary History: The View from the East," Levy calls for a redefinition of the foundational exclusiveness of Hebrew literature, advocating for its contextualization within a larger heteroglossic cultural system.\(^{370}\) In her view, canonical Hebrew literature defined by a Eurocentric criterion must expand its horizons and renegotiate its borders, so as to incorporate the Arab history and origins of Mizrahi literature. Levy's project relates to Mizrahi literature's marginalized position, which is due to the emergence of both Jewish nationalism (Zionism) and the establishment of the nationalist Arab movements.\(^{371}\) These processes of marginalization culminated in the traumatic loss experienced by Mizrahi writers upon their immigration to Israel, as discussed for instance by Shohat.\(^{372}\) Both politically and culturally, Zionism's self-definition was framed solely in Eurocentric terms, adopting a colonial attitude toward Arab culture. Jewish-Arabic writers wishing to survive in the literary field and maintain a readership were forced to pledge allegiance to Hebrew and to a Eurocentric literary canon, a pledge which included a denial of their profound relationship with the Arabic literary and cultural world.\(^{373}\)

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\(^{370}\) Levy, "Reorienting", 138.

\(^{371}\) Levy, "Reorienting", 139.


\(^{373}\) For a testimonial concerning this subject see *Gvulot ha-Ruah*, the autobiographical accounts of Sami Michael one of the most prominent Mizrahi proze writers.
The cultural-political conditioning of the Mizrahi subject following his immigration to Israel had put him in a position where, at least to a certain extent, his self-definition of Mizrahi identity had been structured by its oppositional relation to Zionist Eurocentric culture. This binary, dichotomic position gives rise to Levy's question: "What might the Mizrahi writer bring to the proverbial table that is not a direct product of the encounter with Israeliness? How can we go beyond the hermeneutics of “hybridity” in our reading of Mizrahi texts?"\(^{374}\).

On the other hand, though, a Mizrahi discourse seeking to move away from this very binary position, from its signification and construction by the 'other' toward an independent, non-subversive self-definition of mental and political selfhood had also been present throughout the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century. This discourse culminated during the last two decades with a variety of cultural articulations. One example is the book "Eastern Appearance/Mother Tongue: Present that stirs in the Thickets of its Arab Past" which merged an exhibition of contemporary Mizrahi art with a series of various essays.\(^{375}\) In its introduction entitled: "Mi-Shem ‘Etsem le-Shem ‘Atsmenu" (roughly translated to: "From a Noun to our own Noun"), the collection's co-editor, Yigal Nizri, advocated for a "new kind of listening" which is necessary within a discourse forcing upon its subjects the transference of something which had been once private, personal and intimate into a space which is "its total opposite", a public, political, and signified sphere.\(^{376}\) Yehuda Shenhav and Hannan Hever's recent exploration and deconstruction of the Jewish-Arabic hyphenated identity, also aimed at resurrecting a lost sphere of Mizrahi selfhood. In their article they

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\(^{374}\) Levy, "Reorienting",153.

\(^{375}\) Nizri and Ben Zvi. *Hazut Mizrahit: Hoveh ha-na’t bi-Sevakh ‘Avaro ha-‘Aravi.*

\(^{376}\) Nizri and Ben Zvi. *Hazut Mizrahit*, 11-12.
demonstrate the ways in which the concept of a Jewish-Arab invoked Zionist anxieties leading to a policy that insisted on the separation of the Jew from the Arab, so as to disable its ongoing historical hyphenation. Lastly, it is from within the very same impulse to refuse the reconstruction of a Mizrahi dichotomic position that the establishment of the discussion group "The East Writes its Self" took place. The group which was led by Mizrahi scholar, poet and activist Haviva Pedaya operated within the Van-Leer institute in Jerusalem between 2006-2008 and sought to address: "the construction and processing of the East by the East itself".

In what manner does Darwish's afterlife within Mizrahi poetry contribute to this ongoing exploration and self-writing of Mizrahi identity? According to Alon, Darwish has been adopted as a “father figure" by a large number of Mizrahi poets. She argues that the multitude of Darwish references, both direct and indirect, in the work of Mizrahi poets creates a new symbolic poetic map in which his character stands as an obvious source of inspiration. She then very briefly discusses the content (and not the poetics) of Shalom-Chetrit's poem, "A Mural with no Wall: A Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish", the close reading of this poem will be at the center of this chapter.

Prior to embarking on any such reading, we must first address the fundamental question of Darwish's appeal to Mizrahi writers. Why is he afforded such a meaningful afterlife within Mizrahi poetry, and why is he adopted as a role model? Notwithstanding the differences between

377 Shenhav and Hever, "‘Arab Jews’ after structuralism: Zionist discourse and the (de)formation of an ethnic identity", 101-118.
378 Van-Leer Institute, "Ha-Mizrah Kotev".
379 ʻAlon, Efsharut Shlishit le-Shirah, 15-16.
them, it seems fairly obvious that both Darwish and Mizrahi poets share, to some extent, a similar kind of hybridity or dialectic of identity, as both are marginalized by the dominant Zionist, Eurocentric, anti-Arabic hegemony.\textsuperscript{380} The important thing though, is that Darwish did not succumb to his hybrid position, and was able to transcend it. So, while large parts of his early poetry are devoted to the negation of the other's unjust gaze, in his more developed stage he offers a resistance which transcends this narrow dialectics of identity and produces a rich, complex positive dialogue with other forms of Arab and Western modern poetics.\textsuperscript{381} It is, no doubt, his successful transcendence among other factors as well, that had made Darwish such an appealing model for Mizrahi writers, who are, as we have previously demonstrated also searching for ways out of a somewhat similar dialectic position.

In the following pages I will closely read a poem written by Sami Shalom-Chetrit, which is addressed directly to Darwish's poetry. As we shall closely observe, within Shalom-Chetrit's poem, Darwish functions both as a marker of the speaker's impossible desire to fully reconnect with his Arabic past, and as a presence which enables the speaker to deconstruct his Mizrahi identity and renegotiate its borders. Thus, his presence signifies a limit, pointing toward the traumatic dislocation of Shalom-Chetrit's Mizrahi speaker from the discourse of modern Arabic poetry. Moreover, his appearance as a signifier in the poem gives testimony to the fundamentally external gaze by which the speaker attempts to recreate his poetic dialogue with modern Arabic poetry. It bears witness to the rupture between the Mizrahi speaker and his Arabic roots,

\textsuperscript{380} I am not suggesting that their hybrid positionality, nor their historical positioning is the same, but rather that both their Arab identities had been marked as "Arab" vis-à-vis their encounter with a Zionist oppressive bias.

\textsuperscript{381} The tension between the reductionist attitude toward Darwish's 'resistance' poetry, and a view that acknowledges him to be a pioneer of a complex Palestinian poetics, had been the focus of the first and second chapters of this dissertation.
exposing its unavoidable external positionality in relation to the narrative of Arabic literature. The reference, or the signifier "Darwish" not only stands in opposition to a more complex intertextual relationship, one that was still very much a part of the writings of some first-generation Mizrahi poets. It embodies Shalom-Chetrit's poetic Mizrahi desire to liberate his own subjectivity through the self-liberation already achieved by Darwish, the Palestinian.  

Importantly then, the signifier 'Darwish' is perceived in the poem as a powerful marker of a poetic and cultural option of self-liberation, but is also, as we shall discover, an indicator of a limit, an inhibition, marking the unbridgeable otherness of Arabic modern poetry. It is the difference between the Jewish-Arab identity of the speaker who had already been historically subjected by Zionism, cut off from the continuity of Arab literature, and between Darwish's integral sense of belonging to that very same continuity that are at the heart of Shalom-Chetrit's intertextual encounter with him.

“A Mural With no Wall”: Sami Shalom-Chetrit’s Poetics of Jewish Mizrahi Self Exploration

Mizrahi writers are often divided by their intergenerational position in relation to their immigration from Arab countries to Israel. Within this division, Sami Shalom-Chetrit is

382 That Palestinian and Mizrahi victimhood and displacement are part of the very same colonial paradigm, had been recently argued by Shohat in On the Arab-Jew, 331-338.

383 See: Alon, Efsharut; Oppenhaimer, Mah Zeh.
considered a second-generation Israeli Mizrahi poet. At the age of three, his family immigrated from Morocco to Israel and settled in the development-town of Ashdod. He has so far published six collections of Hebrew poetry and a novel, in addition to numerous academic books on the subject of the Mizrahi struggle with identity.

Shalom-Chetrit's poem, "A Mural with no Wall- a Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish" appeared in his last collection of poetry titled "Jews", a book containing poems written by Shalom-Chetrit between 2003-2007.\(^{384}\) The broad general ethnic/religious category 'Jews' that Shalom-Chetrit chooses for the title of the collection stands in stark contrast to the titles of his previous poetry collections titles, namely: *Freha is a Beautiful Name*, published in 1995, and *Poems in Ashdodian* in 2003.\(^{385}\) Both earlier titles bring to the forefront the subversive role of Arabic's lingual otherness in the face of a hegemonic and oppressive Hebrew. The title *Freha is a Beautiful Name* seeks to restore the original meaning of the Moroccan feminine name *Freha* (literally meaning joy or happiness), after it had been degraded by modern Hebrew speakers, used as a derogatory nickname meaning "a common, imprudent, uneducated, unrefined girl who dresses according to the latest fashion".\(^{386}\) This description has usually been employed in relation


\(^{385}\) Shalom-Chetrit, *Frecha Shem Yafeh*.

\(^{386}\) Definition taken from: Ben-Amotz and Ben-Yehuda, *Milon ʻOlami le-ʻIvrit Meduberet*. 
to Mizrahi young women, and has been critically viewed in the past two decades to be part of a male oriented Ashkenazi Zionist discourse.\textsuperscript{387}

While in \textit{Freha is a Beautiful Name} Shalom-Chetrit exposes and critiques Ashkenazi discourse by restoring the original, lost Arabic meaning of the word, \textit{Poems in Ashdodian} (published in 2003) goes a step further toward a subversive form of Mizrahi self-articulation, as it asserts an alternative mode of self-expression. The collection is composed in a Hebrew language which diverts from the mainstream, hegemonic 'correct' way in which Hebrew should be spoken, so as to present us with a minor language embedded with its own inner codes, \textit{Ashdodian} (named after Shalom-Chetrit's home town, Ashdod).\textsuperscript{388} While these two collections indicate Shalom-Chetrit's preoccupation with Mizrahi identity as oppositional to an oppressive other, the title of his most recent collection, \textit{Jews} (published in 2008), directs us toward a new frontier, as he locates himself no longer within the dichotomy of the oppositional tension vis-à-vis Zionist Eurocentric hegemony, but rather transcends this tension, locating his collection within the broader, yet more vague, religious-ethnic category of Jews.

The starting point of \textit{Jews} fashions a wider existential space which is no longer plainly tied up with the former Mizrahi-Zionist dichotomy. This suggests a shift where the project of revolting against the constraints of the presumed Mizrahi-Ashkenazi dichotomy gives way to a position of

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\textsuperscript{387} For some of the discussions revolving around the use of the word \textit{Freha} in contemporary Hebrew, see for example: Michalzon-Drori, \textit{Any (lo) Freha}.

\textsuperscript{388} In \textit{Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature} Deleuze and Guattari define a minor literature as one which is written in a language that: "doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that its language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization." (16). Similarly, in "Mizrahi Fiction as a Minor Literature", 98-114, Oppenheimer claims that second generation Mizrahi literature, while written in Hebrew, should be viewed as a minor literature, since its writers tend to undermine the major language's (Hebrew) conventions, narrative, symbols and its relation to neighboring languages.
self-exploration, where the all-inclusive category of Jews is the starting point. This is not to say that this collection is devoid of poems carrying the same spirit of resistance against the canonical Hebrew dominant culture. These are still very much present, yet the general register of the collection indicates that the oppressed position from which the speaker of the poems articulates his overall message has been transformed into a different position. This position allows Shalom-Chetrit to explore his identity from the seemingly 'universal' point of view of the Jews.\(^{389}\)

Just as the speaker in the poem, as we shall further explore, makes his intricate journey toward the impossibility of a new form of being a Jew, so does the collection as a whole present us with a similar move, as it proceeds toward its closing section titled "Last Jews".\(^{390}\) In it, Shalom-Chetrit presents a series of poems that conduct a dialogue with the photographs of Frédéric Brenner taken from his book "Diaspora".\(^{391}\) Over a period of twenty-five years Brenner documented the lives of diasporic Jews in different contexts among the Arab world and in other places worldwide. Every page in this last section presents us with a photo and a poem related to it. These poems, which are full of stark irony are juxtaposed with the photos, emphasizing, time and again, the intolerable gap between the peaceful existential mode depicted in the photos, and the traumatic aftermath of the immigration to Israel of these very same Jewish-Arab

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\(^{389}\) I am by no means suggesting here that the category “Jews” enjoys an ex nihilo universal status. My claim is rather that in using this category within the specific context of Mizrahi-Ashkenazi relationship, and within the discourse of the politics of identity in Israel, Chetrit is locating himself within the most legitimate category possible, a category which bypasses ethnic differentiations.

\(^{390}\) Shalom-Chetrit, Jews, 138-190.

\(^{391}\) Brenner, Diaspora: Homeland in Exile. Some of these poems were first published in Brenner's book in a trilingual format of English, French and German.
communities. In bitter poetic strokes Shalom-Chetrit empathically depicts their degraded cultural, religious and economical life in Israel.

The fact that Shalom-Chetrit is able to liberate himself from the constraints of narrow Mizrahi-Ashkenazi dichotomous discourse, and take as his starting point the broader category of Jews, might well be a result of the gradual transformation in the symbolic status of Mizrahim within Israeli society. While Mizrahi identity is still very much a subject for debate, a shift in both the economic and cultural status of Mizrahim is no doubt taking place. Be it in the field of popular music, literature or mainstream politics, Mizrahi representation is becoming more and more central.\(^{392}\) This background helps us understand Shalom-Chetrit's use of the broad ethnic category of Jews as his starting point. The hyphenated, hybridized identity (Jewish-Arab, Mizrahi-Israeli, etc.) is substituted for a category that may be applied to all Jews (Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, or other) living in and outside Israel. Noticeably though, while using this category implies a new kind of freedom and a sense of empowerment, it also emphasizes Shalom-Chetrit's proclaimed goal to transcend Israeli national identity. Choosing the religious-ethnic category of Jews over the national secular category of Israelis implies his dissatisfaction with the latter, and undermines the rigid correlation between Mizrahi identity and territorial space. In conclusion, it is because, to some extent, Mizrahi discourse had been able to overcome its dichotomous position in relation to Ashkenazi Eurocentric oppression, and gain its fair share of "Israeliness", that Shalom-Chetrit

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is able to renegotiate and explore Mizrahi identity through a return to the pre-national category of Jews.

How does his "Qasida to Mahmoud Darwish" fit in with this Mizrahi perspective on Jewish identity? In what way is Darwish's presence evoked so as to allow Shalom-Chetrit's sense of his own Jewishness to be explored? It is both Darwish's poetic legacy and his actual historicity and biography as Palestine's national poet which function throughout the poem as a stable referential field, around which Shalom-Chetrit's speaker weaves his ever-fluctuating self-exploration, and is able to express the uncertainties of his own existential and ethical stand. It is against the unstable identity of Shalom-Chetrit's speaker, his inner dislocation in relation to both Ashkanzi Jews and Arabs, that the numerous poetic Darwish references function as ethical milestones, which harmoniously bind place, time and identity, and provide the backdrop upon which Shalom-Chetrit's deconstructionist poetic movement takes place.

This fundamental manner in which the poem constructs its meaning is clear from the very outset and is reflected by the title of the poem, itself a direct reference to Darwish's collection of poems Mural (published in 2000). Shalom-Chetrit subverts the original concept of Mural (jidariyyah), as he titles his poem “A Painting without a Wall- a Qasida to Mahmoud Darwish.” The absence of the wall in Shalom-Chetrit's poetic painting, as we shall further realize, stands for the absence of a stable Mizrahi geo-historical place. Indeed, the internal, mental dislocation of Mizrahi identity, as well as the external geographical one appears to be a major theme of the poem. The imagery of poetry written without a wall hints to the current moment of crisis in Mizrahi self-definition. This identity, according to Shalom-Chetrit, is first and foremost a disembodied identity, caught between worlds, its words floating, wandering between possible spaces of social and cultural existence.
In Transit: Homelessness as a Starting Point

Firstly, and before I delve into its close reading, here is the full version of the rather long poem in Hebrew followed by Shalom-Chetrit self-translated version into English:

**ציור ללא קיר - קסידה למחמוד דרוויש**

זה טום שרייטヂי לכותב אליך לא עליך
ווכעפשי את עדו קרפסה הלוחה, מאי
אך מלמדות מאהלות נבואות עלי גירוב חוף
 ударתי שיר שלך, ומלדתי hereby מוקופות כדורים.
שהשרדה שלתרונות אתה גלי רעיות את מתכלת הבקאה
לא קנאתי סופרים, ולא קנאתי גמלים.
בכמה אני שחקל מים שלך, או לי מולדת חכמה לא שבכתי ולא שבררתי.
אבל אנא תاهتمام עליך, אנא עליך, אני בموا ידיכים
ואל אנא ת בצורה להדחה בין הדורות
והוזה שוב ישוב שלום תרגום חיית antagonist.
והזה בברуни ישיל הרצלה -

אניيري ביבשה הגרות לכל יד הבורשקה ביבי המחלש
הבנが増え או הדורות להתקסםvla את בתו ידידי המחלשים
ואנחנו את שחרא בגן בכתנים מהוית חובה
שילא ארזה ואל מעוני ידכ מחרים הגונים.
וזה האיריד iptl וסניפה או סברד גזוה,
ואל המוזא יכובד חוד גולות האסירים
שכבר בבירת הנישאים של אשת אשה ניתן לא שמעה.
שרמתו במרוחקאות ובתרונות ובעברishi.
זרוק החודות על האחים, עמו כלי התלונתה,
ככ חווים אולטרה ואולטרה, יניטים ביו הדרים.
ועבשות החגיגות לדול מרגשיה וריש מגלים הפפה.
והרפסות ובינבונים, כדריםANCED, או חזור,
אפריל לא שירד לולע עבר חזר ואורב
המרדמוס שחי לידם את defaultManagerות הקדומות של הער.
והן המיתות לא הפרטניציים. נפוחו הלא אל פורפורה.
אני ולא אהיה סבירי הכבוד יאשומ זור מודים בכל קוצות העיניים
כל פעמים_None אוダーיו אנא עזויות עלא möchtenוnad את צעירים והצעירים עם שרותם - אנא לחם.
וכ المجנים הא accruות אברכים באברכים שחררומ - אנא לחם.
כי אני ואתה מנהלים את השותפונים שבעים.
אני הנכהו וירגוז בפרקטות בקרס.
 whipped הוא עוג集成电路
ופנס לבנט בקנקן וקורא ערב宓ולך
ונמציא אתператорים יכול שאל אראת שפק
וא פל אכזבה על עיבוד.
יהודי דברים.
אבא אני, ושומע חברון אחר המוגרבי מעצמך, שקורא אלה:
מאיתנו אתה, אני יעני…
מכאן בבקשת תאעיוש לא…
במלים עוד, בתוך שלו流れ אני, אותי בְרָׁקותי, שלא…Iv
אותך בְרָׁקותי, בכל קהלת בסיסי נרדם ולא…Iv
איכה לא יозвращ הכתובות והɜ왔רים, והמן הרחק הקיר
והם באדמתך בעברית, יהודי מזוודה
שלי אחרים יהודי עמק והיה קיומם רחוק,
שלך שם… לא ידיעתי ואותי מלה עברי
חמתיез, ואותך בתוך כמה,? אינטלקטואל
לאף côtב ויהי שלג ישירים ציוני, שלום
cל כל מה שבהמה יהודית היא הוסובות עם האלא
אמא לא שחתה עיון הלתות פצץ עמקות המילה,
אורכי כל מה שבהמה יהודית היא הוסובות והשמאות והכול
אחריותapeutית, ל垄 חולך איש, איש
אתה אחריותantt, לא
אתה אחריותantt, לא
אתה אחריותantt, לא
אתה אחריותantt, לא
אתה אחריותantt, לא
אתה אחריותantt, לא
At the end of it, to explain the love and the victory of
for him when I said the songs once in your land, I understood
and I cried to the words, that I understood in their justice,
I cannot write the letters, that I planted,
and I cannot draw a picture, in their search,
and I cannot do anything, in his presence,
and I cannot do anything, in his presence,
and I cannot do anything, in his presence,
and I cannot do anything, in his presence,
and I cannot do anything, in his presence,
הלוחם, הכלה, לחפש ו多个国家 ש衛ת את שמי לעיל
ולוחם מסודר את תמרן, זה ואזור הדוהרים!'

'הרשים,'
אנט דלונטין, יוחנן פאולוס, מומקן, הערבי, שבע,
וא צאצאים חורדים חזרה חזרה ושוב אור
והופעלים מתכון של כמי,
מערבית על ערי השדות של ללוכן,McCann, ניו
ואיר הנגזלת, חוזה הדשה וה로그 באחד מביתו של!
סשב חלבית מענייניה מביתות לא אפקט מביה'.
'hiro של קוסם וממיס מדיה ניידת של פרק שה묘.
ואני ירח市の והרג בר שבח ושוב
dי לוחחר אט מענייןTodd מחרי;'
ואני השעה ימי לא הסתכל לוחחר,อง最先进的, אנא מ煨נה, גדלToddリアנס
ונע יותלט של פלא והمُה יכולים בפי פרק משוב ששל פרק משוב שורש השם
ואלי ברבים בשיבור הפרק המשוב של פרק משוב שורש השם
—גלבוש, שלום ורגעים (꿈 שלק היהודים, שים על כל הדורות),

'וירבד ומפגעים של היהים לא ארץ כל הקבץ, 
במזה, אז, שלדו או עוד פעמים, 
אקרע מענייני אדם ואנשים,

סфонת bölüm והופעה,
'אוהי זה שפיאד,
מי שפיאד הוא,
יוודר ביל הדורים, 
ועבר ביל אפרים,
ומדווד לא פלדית, 
מולדים לא מודוור,
'צづくり לא מלח,
משורר לא זבטי,
'קור לא ציר,
'צורי לא קיר.'
A Mural with No Wall: A Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish

It’s been a while that I’ve wanted to write to you, not about you, And even now I don’t know where to start, from where I can take words to face your eternal words, and I am in transit Through the verse-houses of your poems, homeland of the words, folded into slim volume – cities Of poetry which – I’ll be frank with you – fill me with envy recently; Not that of a poet but of an exile: it is so yours, so fully yours, I have no such homeland, neither in writing nor on earth But do not pity me – that’s not it. When it comes down to it, I am the murderer And a thousand petitions against the occupation won’t help me, I am the soldier Who kills three pigeons again and again with a single shot And it is a matter of habit – It was me who shot the forsaken horse, alone beside the house that became my new home And I who sealed its windows well against the keening of the yearning mourners And I who sealed the well with armored concrete That I should not see nor hear life from within the water And what do I need an Arab horse or eternal Sabra cactus for? You will find not even one Sabra cactus to soothe your soul in the sand dunes of Isdud Where we built a city for people who have never heard your name Your name rubbed out in Moroccan and in Russian and in Ashdodian Hebrew, To tell you the truth, Andalusia or not, That’s how we do Andalusia in Ashdod, among the Jews, And now they celebrate fifty years for it in a brand-new museum by the sea, exactly at the spot where Nabi Younes, a fishing village, used to stand; and the exhibition holds Not even one shred of lonely Arab horses and no Sabras And children are taught the ancient history of the city The Philistine, not the Palestinian, because museums are not about politics.

394 Shalom-Chetrit, Jews. Shalom-Chetrit self-translated most of the collection’s poems and published them in 2014.
I read your poems as indictments and plead guilty to every single charge,
Each time anew, and my thousands of protests will not help here,
against the elders of Zionism,
Nor the youngest, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, white and black –
I am one of them
Because I am not one of you, that is the miserable bottom line;
I – who steals in and out of your thresholds as if it were my own -
Sipping from the Arab coffee,
Kicking at the jug and shouting ‘dirty Arab!’
Smashing each and every mirror so that I will not see in them
The face of my grandfather, puzzling back at me, in Arabic.
What do you mean Arabic? I am a Hebrew poet!
I am a jailor-poet, do not believe a word I say,
I am the jailor of myself and of my words
Whose wings are clipped, and of my sleep that wanders,
With no exact address to rest within,
And you were so right – the homeland is not a suitcase;
And you were so right – the homeland is a suitcase,
As the Jews can explain at the airport, you there!
What are you flying with the whole homeland in your suspicious suitcase?
That’s the most basic irresponsibility, step aside please, I
The security screener dressed up as a Middle Eastern intellectual
Desperately seeking his homeland inside an Arab suitcase,
And me, all the words of love and agony that I have written and
that I have yet to write and also all those
That beat against my temples, that I will never write,
Even they will never be salvation for me and for you
As in my life I embody your death,
You are suffocated because I breathe,
You are hungry because I eat,
You are bound because I am unfettered,
Write it down,
Your shackles are my wings
And how am I to write you words of peace, of coexistence, *ya’ani ta’ayush*
Even if I buy myself a suitcase just like yours and travel far away from here,
And I have traveled so, so far away from here, and it does not go away, this thing,
As an Arab intellectual once told me with a madman’s bluntness:
“How can you insist on being with the Jews?”
I laughed at him, what do you mean, how? I am a Jew, I do not know how to be something else,
What insolence! I am a Jew, not a Zionist but a Jew, I have been a Jew since the dawn of the Mugrabi man,
And perhaps I did not really understand until my son grew up and became a lad who reads for himself and hears things on his own...
And one day, when I told him sadly how far he is going from us, from the Jews, he shook me off politely:
“What do you want from me? You said get up, we have to go to America to run away from the Hebron Jew,
But you can’t, because there are no other Jews in the world... you are running away from yourself, Dad.”
And I sat and wept bitterly; I so envy his freedom,
I so would like to take leave of my knowledge, my mind, my consciousness...
And so, dear Arab poet, I write to you in Hebrew,
And so, painter of eternal words, I paint for you in Jewish,
A mural I have no wall for, nor will I ever,
As I have come to detest your land and my land has always cast me out,
And I live in exile on motes of air, not here nor there,
Closing my eyes, touching, not touching...
Look,
How you fall asleep and the Jew inside me creeps up with words
To make you feel guilty, to wheedle compassion out of you,
And Ecclesiastes and all of his vanity of vanities will not help you here,
Nor will the Song of Songs, nor the poetry of poetries,
Even the Messiah himself will not save you from me and me from you,
Because I have killed him this morning,
I rise every day to kill him anew,
To put off the end of everything,
For on this day atonement shall be made for you...
For on this day he shall rise above the fear of heights and depths
And he will come a-running to me on the waves of the roiling bog,
On this day the worlds will be upturned and then I will stand
Before my grandfather and my son and look them in the eye and say Enough!
The tapestry of my life is Jewish lies in Arabic embroidery,
And it is not that I took your life and made it mine,
But rather your life was once your life until King David came from Poland
And knocked us both down with just one sling shot,
As if we were the eyes of that same Goliath,
A single Polish shot did us both in,
As we were busy with prayers and storytelling, baking bread and cracking olives,
And other time-consuming, mind-sweetening, Arab activities of the heart,
But the King desired me and raised me up
To life, like Elisha, with a single vodka-filled blow, and sent me upon you,
Sent me free and cried: The Arab is dead! The Arab is dead! Long live the new Jew!
Write it down,
I was born Jewish out of your death, the death of the Arab in me,
And then we danced a bracing Hora and the Polack brandishes my grandfather’s beard
And points at my dark skin and sings: Here is where I came from, this is where I hail from, this is my home!
And I was filled with new Jewish pride and sharp wolves’ teeth and you – rooh min houn! Go away!
You refused to remove yourself from my eyes, watching to the Western horizon...
You became my enemy, who peeks anew at me from the mirror every morning,
And I spit and curse and kill you and kill you again,
To rebirth myself a renovated Jew,
And do not mistake me, I am not here to replace you,
I am not an Orientalist, I am Oriental, ya’ani a Mizrahi Jew,
There is no atonement or redemption for me, not in this lifetime,
Perhaps on the day that your three companions overcome their fear of heights,
Lo,’ those inquirers into the secret of life –
Gilgamesh, Solomon, and Yeshua (Jesus, King of the Jews) –
And descend from the top branches of the tree of life down to the land of the end of all,
On that day, which will nevermore come,
I will tear the mask off my face,
Benevolent of countenance and soul,
And be who I am,
Whoever I am I will be,
A Jew with no Jews,
An Arab with no Arabs,
A suitcase with no homeland,
A homeland with no suitcase,
A painter with no words,
A poet with no paint,
A wall with no mural,
A mural with no wall.

The question of poetic and historical dislocation is bluntly introduced in the beginning of the poem and is intimately linked to its first Darwish reference:

It’s been a while that I’ve wanted to write to you, not about you
And even now I don’t know where to start, from where
I can take words to face your eternal words, and I am in transit
Through the verse-houses of your poems, homeland of the words,
Folded into slim volume – cities
Of poetry which – I’ll be frank with you – fill me with envy
recently; (lines 1-7)

We observe immediately that the question of self-articulation is emphasized, and it is through the encounter with Darwish that its problematic is introduced. Self-articulation is intimately linked to the question of a textual place. It is historical positionality that is at the heart of the problem, as the speaker defines himself as being "in transit through the verse-houses of your poems". This sentence is rendered as follows in the Hebrew source text:

\[ \text{ואני חולף עובר בבתי שיר שלך} \]

What gets somewhat lost in the English translation is Shalom-Chetrit's direct reference here to one of Darwish's most debated poems within Israeli literary discourse: "ʿAbiruna fi Kalamin ʿAbir" (Passing Through Fleeting Words).

As Amit-Kochavi (1999) tell us, the poem was first published by Darwish in the back page of the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Anba* in January of 1988.\(^{395}\) Historically, these were the days of the first Intifada and Darwish's publication of the poem reverberated within Israeli literary discourse.\(^{396}\) The poem starts off with the speaker describing Israelis as those "Passing Through Fleeting Words", and it was viewed by its Hebrew readers as signifying Darwish's unequivocal support

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\(^{396}\) The first Palestinian Intifada, or popular uprising began in December 1987, and had ceased with the Madrid conference in 1991.
for the Intifada. The most incendiary line in the poem was Darwish's specific call for Israelis (even though they were not mentioned directly) to: "leave our country, our land, our sea our wheat, our salt, our wounds, Everything, and leave."\textsuperscript{397}

The poem has since been translated numerous times into Hebrew, with the intent of clarifying its political position, specifically whether it calls for a total expulsion of Israeli Jews from the whole of the state of Israel, or whether it is just calling them to retreat from the 1967 occupied territories. The different translations were surveyed by Amit-Kochavi, and re-debated recently by Huda Abu-Mukh.\textsuperscript{398} The poem was not only rejected by national right circles, but by the so-called Zionist liberal left as well. Thus, the poem caused a falling out in Darwish's long standing relationship with Hillit Yeshurun, a liberal left-wing Zionist and the editor of the Israeli literary periodical \textit{Rooms} (Hadarim).\textsuperscript{399}

In aligning himself with Darwish's definition of the Israelis as "those who pass through fleeting words," Shalom-Chetrit's speaker embraces Darwish's analysis of his (Shalom-Chetrit's) homelessness as an Israeli, and makes this the starting point of his own self-exploration. Simultaneously, by gesturing Darwish's poem, he positions his dialogue with Darwish as essentially different than that of Yeshurun and of the liberal left Ashkenazi Zionist milieu. For while their dialogue with Darwish had been conditioned on the latter's acceptance of certain

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{397} Translation taken from the \textit{Jerusalem Post}, April 2, 1988.
\textsuperscript{398} Abu-Mukh, "Tirgum ve-Koah:”; 98-111. For a full-scale discussion of the publication and its aftermath, see the previous chapter of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{399} As I already mentioned in the previous chapter: Yeshurun was offended by Darwish's publication of the poem; her response was to leave a blank page in the place where Darwish's poems were supposed to be published. Eventually Darwish and Yeshurun patched things up, a reconciliation that culminated with a special in-depth interview of Darwish, which appeared accompanied by the publication of a larger number of translated poems in the 12\textsuperscript{th} issue of the magazine.
\end{flushright}
game rules, namely, that he (Darwish) accept the Israel Jewish presence in Palestine as legitimate, Shalom-Chetrit embraces Darwish and the possible ramifications of his position without question.

In fact, it is within and in relation to Darwish's textual legacy, depicted here as binding the textual with the national geography of a 'homeland', that Shalom-Chetrit's speaker begins to search for his own voice. By accepting the 'role' assigned to him by Darwish of being in 'transit', Shalom-Chetrit's speaker locates himself outside the Zionist definition and discourse of Israeli self-identity, in which geographical space is crucial, therefore hinting, already in the opening lines of his "Qasida" toward a broader, placeless horizon of self-identity.

I Shot the Deserted Horse: Denying the Palestinian, Denying the Arab Within

If the beginning of the poem acts as a declaration of the speaker's state of dislocation, and points toward a new horizon of Mizrahi self-definition, the center parts of Shalom-Chetrit's Qasida present us with a critical re-rendering of Mizrahi historical narrative. As the speaker attempts to account for the complex matrix of his hybrid identity, he introduces a rather familiar triangle whose well-known characters are the Israeli Mizrahi (the speaker), the occupied Palestinian (Darwish) and the Israeli Ashkenazi (presented in the closing part of the poem as King David from Poland).

The presence of the Israeli Ashkenazi is secondary, however, for the main melodrama of the poem concentrates on the deconstruction of the relationship between the Mizrahi speaker and Darwish, who embodies the voice of the occupied Palestinian. Throughout the poem, the speaker identifies himself with a series of different violent personae: First he is a murderer and a soldier: "Who kills three pigeons again and again with a single shot" (line 14). Later he becomes a jailor,
pleading to his addressee: "do not believe a word I say" (line 40), and lastly, he makes an appearance as a security screener dressed up as a Middle Eastern intellectual who is: "Desperately seeking his homeland inside an Arab suitcase" (line 51). This intertwining sequence of roles depicts various manifestations of the Israeli Mizrahi as an occupier, enacting symbolic violence, sometimes more blunt and sometimes more subtle. They operate within the poem as a series of confessions to Darwish, since the speaker reads the latter's "poems as indictments," pleading "guilty to every single charge" (line 38).

Unlike the first Darwish reference, used by Shalom-Chetrit in order to generally characterize his own fleeting speech in relation to that of Darwish's, we encounter here a series of Darwishian references which function differently. Here Shalom-Chetrit evokes numerous iconic images from Darwish's poems, in order to illustrate how his Mizrahi speaker inflicts symbolic violence upon these very metaphors. The first two images to be evoked are the Abandoned Horse and the Well, both presented by Darwish in his 1995 collection: Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone.401

The horse and the well are both objects which bind the personal with the national, joining intimate autobiographical moments with the collective. They are both part of Darwish's lost childhood landscape in the village of al-Birwa, and have become for him objects whose shattered presence are sustained and reconstructed from his memory of a time prior to his traumatic

400 This striking image encapsulates the inner contradiction within Mizrachi identity. On the one hand the speaker partakes in the Zionist obsession for security and 'screening', which prohibits him of becoming a true free spirited intellectual. On the other hand, the fact that he is actually screening in order to find a "homeland inside a Arab suitcase" exposes his profound desire to belong, his fundamental estrangement to his historical positioning, and undermines his identification with his role as a security screener.

401 Darwish, Diwan Mahmoud Darwish.
dislocation in 1948. The horse functions as an iconic signifier of heroism in Arabic mythical discourse and imagination, while the deserted horse (following Darwish's use of it), has acquired a similar iconic status in Palestinian post-traumatic discourse.

By "shooting the horse" (line 16), and "sealing the well" (line 18) Shalom-Chetrit’s Mizrahi speaker not only denies Darwish his concrete, historical place and narrative, he more importantly makes sure that the abandonment of the horse (that is, of Arab identity) is final and continuous. The already deserted horse must be shot again, so as to remove any self-doubt and residues of Arabness from Mizrahi self-consciousness. It is for the very same reason that the speaker seals “the well with armored concrete” (line 20). The flowing water signifies both the concrete water of life in the abandoned Palestinian village, but also the symbolic repressed emotional substance of the traumatic lost history, shared in many ways by both the Palestinians and Mizrahim. The Mizrahi speaker must therefore continuously perform a double gesture of occupying the other while castrating his Arab self, lest he, "see nor hear life from within the water" (line 21). The act of acknowledging, or even straightforwardly witnessing Palestinian trauma involves a self-remembrance of the traumatic repressed moment of Mizrahi dislocation as well. Since, unlike the Ashkenazi, the Mizrahi speaker shares a 'secret' common history with the occupied Palestinian (both their Arabness, and their dislocation), he must accordingly act 'holier than the Pope', and

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402 In Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone Darwish revisits and poetically reconstructs scenes from his early childhood. It is, to a great extent an effort to provide a poetical representation of the traumatic events of the Nakba. For an interpretation of the collection as a poetical autobiography see: Hadidi, "Khiyar al-Sira wa-Islam al-Tahbir”, 26-36.

403 The poem is set as a dialogue between a father and his child as they flee in a night journey from their conquered village. The father is portrayed as the carrier of knowledge, as the son keeps asking him various questions, including the fundamental question: Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?. For a thorough discussion of both the poem's title, its connotations and the general significance of the horse See: Taha, "The Power of the Title", 66-83.
repeatedly oppress any sign of empathy, or identification he might share with the occupied Palestinian.

Following this exposition, in which the speaker accepts responsibility for his outward and inward occupation, he moves on to unfold and rewrite the Mizrahi historical narrative by shifting the scene and incorporating a rather familiar premise in contemporary Mizrahi discourse, namely, that of the development town. For the past 30 years, the theme of the development town has been vastly explored by many scholars. Derei's documentary television show "Salah, po zeh Eretz Israel" (Here is Eretz Israel, Oh, Salah) (2017) has lately shown how forcing the new comers from Arab countries to settle down in isolated development towns was part of an overall Zionist policy to deliberately and systematically discriminate against Mizrahim. In the lines that follow, Shalom-Chetrit's speaker evokes the presence of his own home development town: Ashdod. The psycho-geographical transition in the poem, leading from Darwish's deserted horse and home, to the newly born presence of Mizrahim within the development town, is noticeably previewed by the following lines:

And what do I need an Arab horse or eternal Sabra cactus for?
You will find not even one Sabra cactus to soothe your soul
In the dunes of Isdud (lines 22-24).

There seems to be no place for Palestinian memory within early Mizrahi struggle, the Sabra and the Arab Horse, symbols of Palestinian resistance and national identity, are deemed irrelevant

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405 Der‘i, David, "Saleh, po zeh Eretz Israel".
signifiers in the early struggle of Mizrahim. We immediately observe that the previous rhetoric of Mizrahi guilt toward the Palestinian is substituted for the tragic cords of historical necessity, in which Mizrahi struggle was solely concerned with its own displacement within the Zionist state, unable therefore to link its own Arab displacement to that of the Palestinians'. Nonetheless, Shitirit's speaker simultaneously evokes the history of the Nakba, by using the name Isdud, the Palestinian village which had been destroyed in 1948, and replaced later by the Israeli development town of Ashdod.

The previous apologetic position of the Mizrahi speaker as occupier is now transformed into a position of imposed victimization by the Zionist Ashkenazi establishment. The speaker now turns to characterize the cultural existence of Ashdod:

Where we built a city for people who have never heard your name
Your name rubbed out in Moroccan and in Russian and in Ashdodian Hebrew (lines 25-27).

Within the discourse of a victimhood the speaker's mentioning of “Ashdodian Hebrew,” among the other immigrant languages, Russian and Moroccan, undermines the self-battering and apologetic tone established in the opening of the poem. Ashdodian itself is the term coined by Shalom-Chetrit in his previous collection, Poems in Ashdodian, published in 2003. The fact that Darwish's name had been "rubbed out" receives here a certain justification, for it is because of the Zionist "melting-pot", where Jewish-Arab immigrants were packed together in forsaken development towns, that it became necessary for Mizrahim to forget the Palestinian past of Isdud. It is in the name of Ashdodian Hebrew, this subversive, Mizrahi, resistant dialect of self-expression, a minor language made to counter canonical monolithic Hebrew speech, that Shalom-Chetrit self-excuses the "rubbing out" of Darwish's legacy, for it was irrelevant when the
Mizrahim were exclusively concerned with the dialectics of their own subordinated position vis-à-vis Zionist hegemony.

The ambiguous stance of Mizrahi self-assertion toward its own denial and repression of the Palestinian struggle is further developed in the lines that follow, with the highly ambivalent introduction of another famous theme from Darwish’s poetry, al-Andalus. Darwish had first poetically introduced al-Andalus as a site of a cultural-historical lost paradise in his 1992 collection *Eleven Stars over the Last Moments of Andalusia*. It has since become one of his core nostalgic metaphors, as it sought to frame the loss of Palestine and to situate it within the larger myth of a lost paradise of Arabic poetic and cultural glory, whose peak had been viewed by many as Muslim Andalusia.\(^406\)

While Darwish's treatment of al-Andalus was always either nostalgic or idealistic, referencing either a lost past or an unfulfilled future, Shalom-Chetrit downplays this function, ironically reframing it in the Mizrahi context of resistance within the oppressive reality of the development town: "To tell you the truth, Andalusia or not / That's how we do Andalusia in Ashdod, among the Jews" (lines 28-29). There is a strong sense of ambivalence here: on the one hand, building their own al-Andalus constitutes a form of Mizrahi cultural resistance, while on the other hand, the exclusion of Palestinians and Arabs from that Andalus undermines its original authentic context and the all-encompassing nature of the Andalusian golden-age.

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\(^{406}\)Generally, al-Andalus has been depicted in Arabic poetry solely as a site of nostalgia. However, Darwish's concept of it varies considerably. As Ghanim tell us in "The Urgency of a New Beginning in Palestine": "On the contrary, Darwish imagined the past in order to go back to it—to return to it differently. This conception of the past as the dream of the intimate future and as the reference to a practical political project entirely distinguishes his writing about the homeland from which he had been expelled from Arabic writing about Andalusia" (77).
Interestingly enough, Shalom-Chetrit, who self-translated the poem into English, either consciously or sub-consciously omits the Hebrew word *benataim*, which means "meanwhile" from the English translation. Therefore, the actual original Hebrew text should be rendered as follows: "To tell you the truth, Andalusia or not / That’s how we do Andalusia in Ashdod, **meanwhile** among the Jews". So, in the Hebrew original text, this make-believe Andalusia is accorded a temporality which might be read as corresponding to Darwish’s ideal of a futuristic return to the all-inclusive Arab paradise of al-Andalus. Temporal or not, Shalom-Chetrit describes an intermediate, somewhat ironic, ambivalent Mizrahi cultural space, in which Ashdodian Jews insistently attempt to recreate their own Andalus within their designated enclosed development-town. Consequently, on the one hand, the reference to al-Andalus reflects a sense of being proud of the local Ashdodian Mizrahi cultural resistance, while on the other hand, there is a strong sense of irony and self-ridicule related to this localized, exclusively Jewish form of al-Andalus as it is compared to Darwish’s all-inclusive concept.

Shalom-Chetrit's ironic tone undermining the sense of Mizrahi achievement fits in with his overall position in the poem, and with his desire to transcend Mizrahi hybrid positionality in relation to Zionist hegemony. The speaker of the poem continues:

> And now they celebrate fifty years for it in a brand-new museum
> By the sea, exactly at the spot where
> Nabi Younes, a fishing village, used to stand; and the exhibition
> Holds
> Not even one shred of lonely Arab horses and no Sabras
> And children are taught the ancient history of the city
> The Philistine, not the Palestinian, because museums are not about Politics (lines 30-37).

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407 On a side note, there is an affinity of tonality between the word *Andalusia* used by Chetrit and the word *Anderlamusia* which means chaos, and is often used in colloquial Hebrew.
By reframing this early sense of an ambivalent Ashdodian Andalus within the context of the museum, that is, of the Others' institutional museum, Shalom-Chetrit's speaker recreates the initial, unequivocal sense of solidarity, which had been momentarily debased, between the speaker and Darwish. Whatever might have been authentic in that preliminary sense of a Mizrahi Ashdodian al-Andalus has been appropriated by the official Zionists "officers of memory", which aim to abolish and deny any possibility of a future al-Andalus, just as they attempt to cast into oblivion any sign of the historical Palestinian Isdud.

The poem goes on to deepen the same dialectical movement by which the Mizrahi speaker continues to assume accountability for ruining both Darwish and the Palestinians as a whole, while inflicting a similar ruin upon his own inner sense of Arabness:

Each time anew, and my thousands of protests will not help here,
Against the elders of Zionism,
Nor the youngest, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, white and black –
I am one of them
Because I am not one of you, that is the miserable bottom line;
I – who steals in and out of your thresholds as if it were my own -
Sipping from the Arab coffee,
Kicking at the jug and shouting ‘dirty Arab’!
Smashing each and every mirror so that I will not see in them
The face of my grandfather, puzzling back at me, in Arabic.
What do you mean Arabic? I am a Hebrew poet!
I am a jailor-poet, do not believe a word I say,
I am the jailor of myself and of my words (lines 40-52).

The speaker's denial of his own Arab identity culminates with the phantom of his grandfather appealing to him in Arabic, and his rebuke of that appeal with the self-assertion of being a Hebrew poet.⁴⁰⁸

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⁴⁰⁸ For more on the motive of shame and self-denial within the works of second and third generations Mizrahi writers see for example: Bar'am, Shemu'elof and Shem-Tov (eds.), Tehudot Zehut.
Here, the very precondition for the formulation and existence of Mizrahi identity is dependent on the annihilation of Palestinian identity and culture:

As in my life I embody your death,
You are suffocated because I breathe,
You are hungry because I eat,
You are bound because I am unfettered,
Write it down,
Your shackles are my wings (lines 67-72)

Within this condensed dichotomy of victimizer-victimized, we find the extremely instructive use of the imperative "write down", which appears in the Hebrew original as the word *tirshom*.\(^{409}\) It appears once more toward the end of the poem, again in the form of the imperative and in a similar context: "Write it down, I was born Jewish out of your death, the death of the Arab in me" (136). The Mizrahi speaker wants his addressee to document his confession, therefore instructing him to "write it down". However, *tirshum* is also, or maybe first and foremost, a direct reference to one of Darwish's most celebrated and discussed poems: "Identity Card". The anaphoric use of the infinitive *sajjil ana 'arabi* (write it down, I am an Arab) functions in Darwish's poem as a fundamental marker of self-assertion and resistance through which the native Palestinian speaker dictates to his Zionist oppressor his subversive historical narrative, reversing and undermining the prevailing power relations between occupier and occupied (See chapter 3 of this thesis).

\(^{409}\) Strictly grammatically *tirshum* is actually the future tense, but it is commonly used in modern Hebrew as the imperative. Moreover, most translations of the poem *Identity Card* use *Tirshum* when they translate the Arabic imperative *sajil*. 
It is only through the tribute paid by Shalom-Chetrit's speaker to Darwish's early linguistic marker of resistance and self-affirmation that this new form of Mizrahi self-assertion may be fully grasped. It demands a recording because it too is subversive. It too asserts a new historical narrative, a new positioning and reckoning with Mizrahi identity. It is a belated acknowledgment, a response to Darwish's original demand of his Zionist oppressor: *sajjil ana ʿarabi.* This response, though, comes not from the expected Eurocentric oppressor addressee, but rather from Darwish's Jewish-Arab 'brother', the Mizrahi. What is being poetically reinforced here is that Mizrahi self-assertion must go beyond its hybrid and ambivalent positionality and fully account for its being part of and cooperating with the oppression of the Palestinians if it wishes to transcend its dialectical position. We begin to understand that for Shalom-Chetrit's Mizrahi speaker, the option of self-liberation depends, first and foremost, upon the process of a gradual moving away from being historically victimized (never a total movement, never a total abandonment), into the realm of accountability. For Shalom-Chetrit's speaker, it is only when the victim realizes that he has become a victimizer and renounces his victimization of the Palestinian that the possibility of a new identity becomes possible.\(^{410}\)

The reoccurring movement in the poem, its re-articulation of the Mizrahi's double identity as both victimizer and victim, embodies its speaker's compulsory need to convey the same thing repeatedly. This repetition expresses formally the labor of Shalom-Chetrit's Mizrahi speaker in working out this new position. In its hyperbolic structure, the poem embodies the difficult process through which Shalom-Chetrit's Mizrahi speaker finally attempts to transcend and

\(^{410}\) The rhetoric of victimhood in Israeli discourse is especially dominant. In left wing criticism it is usually directed against the polemic use of the holocaust as a means of justifying the occupation of the Palestinians. In Mizrahi discourse victimhood is usually debated in the context of the tension between a real historical injustice, and the internalization of the victimized position which prohibits self-liberation. The various ways in which victimhood is represented in Israeli discourse had been lately explored by: Gan, *Korbanutam Aomanutam.*
overcome his hybrid position in the last section of the poem. As we follow the way in which this new self-definition is laid down poetically, we observe that the gradual rebirth of the Mizrahi into a persona which is fundamentally Jewish materializes from within the same reoccurring constant back and forth movement. It is almost as if it is revealed to be the only possible escape from the matrix of an endlessly ambivalent split subject position.

It is again a Darwish reference that is the speaker's springboard to discuss his Jewishness:

   Even if I buy myself a suitcase just like yours and travel far away from here
   And I have traveled so, so far away from here, and it does not go away, this thing (lines 75-78)

This is the second reference to Darwish's suitcase. The first one appeared earlier in the poem: "And you were so right – the homeland is not a suitcase/And you were so right – the homeland is a suitcase" (lines 55-56). This refers to Darwish's poem "Diary of a Palestinian Wound", taken from the collection *My Beloved Awakens* (1969). The poem is dedicated to the Palestinian poetess Fadwa Tuqan and is made up of twenty-four small segments or poems. Shalom-Chetrit's reference relates to segment number fourteen:

   Oh my intractable wound
   My country is not a suitcase
   And I am not a traveler
   I am the lover and the land is my beloved. 411

411 Translation quoted from Arana, R. Victoria, *The Facts on File Companion to World Poetry*. In the value dedicated to *Diary of a Palestinian Wound*, Diego Gerardo mentions that: "Stanza 14 is one of the most cited verse lines of Darwish. It takes a stand against leaving one's country and treating it like a commodity that one can take with him or her" (141).
While Darwish's poem totally rejects the suitcase as a marker of identity, Shalom-Chetrit’s poem is undecided. Shalom-Chetrit's suitcase is a marker of displacement, as it epitomizes his speaker's inner ambivalence and his displaced sense of identity. Therefore, we are presented with a failed attempt to fully identify with Darwish and with the Palestinians by assuming a similar exilic position. It fails because at the very heart of Palestinian exile lies the loss of the beloved homeland, whereas Shalom-Chetrit's speaker renounces his homeland.

It is out of this ambivalence over the image of the suitcase that the option of a new form of Jewish identity arises:

As an Arab intellectual once told me with a madman’s bluntness:
“How can you insist on being with the Jews?”
I laughed at him, what do you mean, how?
I am a Jew, I do not know how to be something else,
What insolence! I am a Jew, not a Zionist but a Jew,
I have been a Jew since the dawn of the Mugrabi man (lines 79-84)

The idea, thus presented for the first time, offers us a new and somewhat radical sense of an exilic Jewish Mizrahi identity. Shalom-Chetrit's speaker, noticeably, is cautious in fully introducing this new form of Mizrahi identity, as the next segment brings in to the picture the speaker's son as a representative of the next Mizrahi generation, one which is much more at ease with such an exilic option for Mizrahi self-definition:

And perhaps I did not really understand until my son grew up and became a lad who reads for himself and hears things on his own
And one day, when I told him sadly how far he is going from us, from the Jews, he shook me off politely:
“What do you want from me? You said get up, we have to go to America to run away from the Hebron Jew,
But you can’t, because there are no other Jews in the world... you are running away from yourself, Dad.”
And I sat and wept bitterly; I so envy his freedom,
I so would like to take leave of my knowledge, my mind, my consciousness... (lines 85-95)
It is through the next generation and through his son's less ambivalent formulation of the matter that the speaker is able to go one step further in crystalizing his own new position and in articulating his own desired state:

And so, dear Arab poet, I write to you in Hebrew,
And so, painter of eternal words, I paint for you in Jewish,
A mural I have no wall for, nor will I ever,
As I have come to detest your land and my land has always cast me out,
And I live in exile on motes of air, not here nor there,
Closing my eyes, touching, not touching (lines 96-102)

Nowhere is the basic premise of the poem more clearly articulated. The Mizrahi speaker in Shalom-Chetrit's poem frantically searches for his own voice, as it scatters around Darwish's unequivocal ethical and moral stance, where place and identity are united and epitomized by the image of the Mural. This frantic, endless search is finally given its suitable description as being Jewish. While Darwish paints his eternal words upon a concrete wall, it is Jewish identity itself which is Shalom-Chetrit's eternal position, homelessness becomes the essence of his new existence: "in exile on motes of air, not here nor there". The idea of a new Jewish exilic Mizrahi identity is gradually introduced. It emerges with the speaker's constant need to rearticulate his foundational traumatic scene of loss and dislocation. The speaker cannot but remain attached to his old victimizer- victimized persona, those parts of him which are still caught up in the hybrid position, a byproduct of the Mizrahi encounter with the Zionist state.

Following this breakthrough in the poem, the poetic narrative regresses once again, offering us another attempt to represent anew the historical Mizrahi drama of being both victim and victimizer. What is evoked this time, though, is not the immediate historical sphere, but rather a mythical, more cosmological logic. As we recall from the opening of the poem, the speaker had
confessed to his "assault" on Darwish's childhood's core images, namely the *well* and the *forsaken horse*. Here, toward the end of the poem, a similar confession is carried out, although the object of the speaker's "assault" is rather Darwish's use of the most canonical yet debated character in the Judeo-Christian tradition, that of the Messiah within of the poem collection *Mural*.

In *Mural*, Jesus is mentioned twice, in the very same manner, as Darwish declares:

> And as Christ walked on the lake,
> I walked in my vision. But I came down
> from the cross because I have a fear of heights and don't
> promise Resurrection. I only changed
> my cadence to hear my heart clearly.⁴¹²

Darwish's fear of heights brings him down from the cross, and back into the known earthly spiritual realm of poetry. He is in no need of transformative resurrection; neither is he the carrier of a new salvation message. Christ functions here in a playful manner, as Darwish allows himself to partly identify with him.

This casual manner is nothing like Shalom-Chetrit's dramatic description of his own relationship with the Messiah:

> And Ecclesiastes and all of his vanity of vanities will not help you here
> Nor will the Song of Songs, nor the poetry of poetries
> Even the Messiah himself will not save you from me and me from you
> Because I have killed him this morning,
> Irse every day to kill him anew
> To put off the end of everything (lines 106-113)

⁴¹² Darwish, *If I were Another*, 139, 143.
We have here a very different kind of a Messiah: to some extent Shalom-Chetrit's speaker is expropriating Darwish's mythical narrative and imagery, and interpreting it within the libidinal social and cultural matrix of hybrid Mizrahi identity. The speaker reproduces the earlier scene of shooting the already deserted horse, replacing it with the ongoing ceremonial, every day, routine killing of the Messiah. This is done "to put off the end of everything." 413 Juxtaposing these two images of the messianic drama, we observe how Darwish's ironic and playful adaptation of messianic heavenly salvation stands in strong contrast to Shalom-Chetrit's version, where the very essence of a possible salvation is put in question.414 If Darwish treats the character of Jesus here as 'canonic literary material', then Shalom-Chetrit vehemently resists the very universal position of Christianity, identifying himself with the traditional role of the Jew, a figure who distorts the option of a universal salvation, disbelieving it, and instead stubbornly sticking to his own version of things.

The speaker's pathos culminates as he describes the fantasy of his own impossible version of a personal Mizrahi Messianic salvation:

For on this day atonement shall be made for you...
For on this day he shall rise above the fear of heights and depths
And he will come a-running to me on the waves of the roiling bog,
On this day the worlds will be upturned and then I will stand
Before my grandfather and my son and look them in the eye and
say Enough!
The tapestry of my life is Jewish lies in Arabic embroidery (lines 115-120)

413 Interestingly, biblical imagery is evoked by the use of the phrase, "I rise every day to kill him anew", whose wording, especially in the original Hebrew version of the poem which uses the particular unmodern word mashkim (rising from sleep) echoes Abraham's rising in the morning (Genesis 22:3) of the Binding of Isaac portion. Inadvertently, theologically, Shalom-Chetrit here downplays the Christian interpretation which views Isaac as a prefiguration of Jesus.

414 Darwish's preoccupation with Christian imagery and especially with the character of Jesus is evident throughout his work and had evolved through his writing. For the latest discussion of Christian imagery and of the centrality of Jesus in the writing of Darwish see: Rahab and Watts-Henderson, The Cross in Contexts, Ch. 5.
The speaker’s rewriting of the scene of a future coming of "the Messiah" opens up with an almost full quote of verse 30 from Leviticus 16, a verse that deals solely with atonement day. Thereafter, following his full cleansing and the complete absolution of his sins, there comes “an upturning of the worlds”, which enables the speaker to finally confront both his son and his grandfather by directly confessing to them that: “The tapestry of my life is Jewish lies in Arabic embroidery”. It is interesting to draw a parallel between the Jewish belief in future salvation and Shalom-Chetrit's Mizrahi narrative of a personal and collective salvation which is yet to come. It seems that the religious imagery is downplayed, as it is converted to a fierce metaphor, enabling yet another representational form of the speaker's ambivalent position.

At this point it seems that Shalom-Chetrit's speaker has revealed another aspect of his newly emerging Mizrahi Jewish identity. Again, following the libidinal pattern of the poem this crescendo of revelation must be tempered (for the last time), by a return of the symptom, and yet another retelling of the Mizrahi victimization narrative. Hence, a full-scale dramatization of the Mizrahi historical narrative is given, this time cast in biblical imagery and put in the mouths of biblical characters:

And it is not that I took your life and made it mine,
But rather your life was once your life until King David came from Poland
And knocked us both down with just one sling shot,
As if we were the eyes of that same Goliath,
A single Polish shot did us both in,
As we were busy with prayers and storytelling, baking bread and cracking olives,

415 The poem's inner structure seems to correspond with Freud's concept of a "compulsory return", as he elaborates it in his seminal work: Beyond the pleasure principle. A compulsory necessity to reenact the primal scene of traumatic Mizrahi dislocation is at play here.
And other time-consuming, mind-sweetening, Arab activities of the Heart
But the King desired me and raised me up
To life, like Elisha, with a single vodka-filled blow, and sent me upon you,
Sent me free and cried: The Arab is dead! The Arab is dead! Long live the new Jew! (lines 116-130)

In this dramatic recasting, King David of Poland represents white Ashkenazi, Eurocentric Jewish Zionist nationalism, whereas the speaker and his addressee, Darwish, are united by their Arabic brotherhood, sharing a common native folklore and a similar culture (baking bread together etc...). Interestingly, both the speaker and his counterpart Palestinian are depicted as eyes in the very same body, that of Goliath, so that their bond is of an organic nature. Underscoring the biblical myth, Goliath appears here as David's victim who is portrayed as the strong aggressor from the very outset as he "knocked us both down with just one sling shot" (line 119). This first blow is successful in annihilating their collective Arab identity. There is a double logic at play here: first there is a cultural cleansing, a symbolic killing of the Arab, and all of his cultural attributes. Thereafter, the Arab-Jew may be reborn, resurrected as solely Jewish in order to play a part within the national Jewish project, hence: "But the King desired me and raised me up/ To life, like Elisha, with a single vodka-filled blow, and sent me" (lines 126-127).

Using the logic of a rebirth implies a disruption of the past, thus the rebirth of the Mizrahi as the new national Jew demands a constant forgetting of his repressed Arab past. Just as earlier in the poem, the deserted Palestinian horse must be shot time and again, just as the Mizrahi speaker must ceremonially kill the Messiah every morning, so the constant meeting with the Palestinian is at the same time an encounter with the repressed, old Arab self.

You became my enemy, who peeks anew at me from the mirror every morning,
And I spit and curse and kill you and kill you again,
To rebirth myself a renovated Jew (lines 140-143)

As with any other national ideology, Zionism imposes on Mizrahim a constant demand to repress their Arab past. However, retaining and maintaining this new Arab-less imagined collective identity demanded constant labor and propaganda. In order for the rebirth of the Mizrahi as a non-Arab Israeli Jew to be successful, he must routinely, on an everyday basis work to banish his Arab parts.

The option of a new Mizrahi Jewish exilic identity, so hesitantly presented toward the end of the poem, is inhibited by the strong mechanisms of the victim-victimizer dichotomy, which the speaker is compelled to repeat. Perhaps it is the impossibility of resolving this Gordian Knot which drives the poem toward its transcendental, phantasmal ending:

There is no atonement or redemption for me, not in this lifetime, Perhaps on the day that your three companions overcome their fear of heights, Lo,’ those inquirers into the secret of life – Gilgamesh, Solomon, and Yeshua (Jesus, King of the Jews) – And descend from the top branches of the tree of life down to the land of the end of all, On that day, which will nevermore come, I will tear the mask off my face, Benevolent of countenance and soul, And be who I am, Whoever I am I will be, A Jew with no Jews, An Arab with no Arabs, A suitcase with no homeland, A homeland with no suitcase, A painter with no words,

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416 See, of course, Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities in *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*.

417 See: Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Gramsci's concept of hegemony and ideology are instructive in understanding the various mechanisms by which Zionist ideology was able to impose European cultural codes, and mark Arabic language and culture as inferior.
A poet with no paint,
A wall with no mural,
A mural with no wall (lines 146-165).

In order for this impossible future Mizrahi salvation to take place, Darwish's three spiritual companions, Gilgamesh, Solomon, and Yeshua must "overcome their fear of heights", and "descend from the top branches of the tree of life down to the/ land of the end of all". This somewhat enigmatic demand indicates a certain tension between Darwish's sense of transcendence and between this new Mizrahi impossible transcendence. Once we realize, though, that this "fear of heights" that is to be overcome is again a reference to the same lines from the Mural collection, quoted earlier in this chapter, we may better understand the meaning of this tension. Darwish's *Mural* reads as follows:

> And as Christ walked on the lake
> I walked in my vision. But I came down from the cross because I **have a fear of heights** and don't promise Resurrection. I only changed my cadence to hear my heart clearly.
> The epicists have falcons, and I have The Collar of the Dove, an abandoned star on the roof, and a winding street that leads to Akko's port, no more and no less.\footnote{Darwish, *If I were*, 139 (my emphasis).}

As I have already mentioned, Darwish's transcendence involves neither a resurrection nor a rebirth; it is rather a return to one's self, to what had always been there, but had gotten lost, be it homeland, childhood or mother. His ironic fear of heights testifies here to the limits of his identification with Christ. However, unlike Christ, Darwish's demand for a salvation is earthly,
pertaining not to a future divine transformation, but rather to a future restoration of an early sense of unity and of justice, a lost paradise of many sorts.419

Now we may fully grasp Shalom-Chetrit's speaker’s negation of the kind of transcendence referenced in Darwish’s poem. Since, unlike Darwish, he is not unified as an historical subject, since he has no place to return to, he calls for an impossible, un-imaginable spiritual transformation. For Shalom-Chetrit’s speaker, a true termination of historical positionality must take place, so that the Mizrahi subject, who will no longer actually be a Mizrahi subject, will finally be able to find his true place. This unsolvable crisis of Mizrahi identity is what causes Shalom-Chetrit’s speaker to seek a different kind of historic positionality, one that approximates the eternal image of the wandering Jew.420

The image of the Wandering Jew is provoked as the speaker advocates for a transcendental homelessness, one that may be fulfilled only by abandoning the social and historical constructions in which the Mizrahi subject is presently immersed. Thus, the speaker wishes to paradoxically cancel the collective ethnic categories of Jews and Arabs, while retaining his own individual identity as being both Jewish and Arab: “A Jew with no Jews/ An Arab with no Arabs”. This fantasy that transcends the prevailing historical social structures will enable the speaker to roam within a space of a universal unity in which he will “…be who I am / Whoever I am I will be”.

419 See: ʿAbbas, *Ittijahat*, 151-152. According to ʿAbbas, the source of Darwish’s poetry lies in his attachment to the double unity of motherland. Darwish's poetic zeal, he claims, is fueled by an obsessive, impossible desire to overcome his separation from these lost unities.

420 There is an abundance of scholarly work on the topic of the wandering Jew. See for example: Barzilai, "Freed ve-ha-Topus Shel ha-Yehudi ha-Noded", 323-341. Barzilai locates the birth of the myth in Germany of 1602, where the character of a Jew named Ahasverus, had been firstly introduced. Ahasverus had presumably been present at Jesus’s crucifixion, advocating for the exemption of his murderer. Following this initial sin, he was prevented from returning to his wife and family in Jerusalem, sentenced to a cursed life of eternal wondering.
In the aftermath of a Mizrahi identity crisis, a new form of a nomadic Jewish existence is the only valid ethical option finally proposed by the speaker. Within this new, debased sense of place, the very ability of language to represent reality is questioned. It is the *logos* of the modern Hebrew language, as the vehicle intended to enable Israeli Mizrahi subjectivity to accurately express itself that is undermined with the movement toward a diasporic self-definition. If, as Derrida writes, every deconstruction is played out against the background of a proposed logocentrism, then this lack of coherent meaning, this fragmented discourse of the speaker, is ironically cast against the *logos* of Darwish’s poetic discourse. For Darwish’s well-justified discourse of native victimhood, and Zionist Ashkenazi oppressive colonial discourse both construct their meaning around a fixed logocentric referential field, in which land, history and language appear as solid categories.

Shalom-Chetrit’s final diasporic position stands in stark contrast to Darwish’s stance. Darwish knows very well that 'a suitcase is a suitcase and not a homeland', and his linguistic logic has as its source the consistent unity of place and identity. This is the reason that he is "a painter of eternal words". The crisis of Mizrahi self-expression, evident from the very beginning of the poem, and exemplified by its hyperbolic, repetitive effort to work out its own historical conditioning finally comes to its temporal relief with Shalom-Chetrit's speaker's fantasy about the end of logical language. In this final instance, the possibility of a mural without a wall and a wall without a mural is a call for a re-definition of Mizrahi conventional language, and of the assumed ties between signifier and signified. At the end of this long poetic account, the only

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422 There is a Mizrahi cultural intertext in which walls of different kind appear, enabling us to think of the Mizrahi condition through the metaphor of the wall. See for example Vicki Shiran's poem (which is also her collection's
hope for Mizrahi subjectivity, in Shalom-Chetrit's view, to fully self-express itself, beyond its imposed hybrid duality, lies in the possibility of deconstructing language itself, and of redefining the existing connections between signifier and signified.

Summary

This chapter has been devoted to the close reading of an imagined dialogue between Sami Shalom-Chetrit's Mizrahi speaker and the figure of Mahmoud Darwish. Addressing Darwish enables Shalom-Chetrit's speaker to engage his displaced, lost Arab history, while reflecting upon his current ethical and political stance as both a victim of Zionism and a victimizer of Palestinians. Darwish occupies a doubled position, being both similar to the Mizrahi in his Arabness, yet different in the fact that he is also the Palestinian victim of that very same Mizrahi. This double position challenges current Mizrahi discourse and forces it to confront the most fundamental contradictions of its current historic positionality.

On the ethical/political level Darwish's strong, unyielding presence and coherent ethical stance urges Mizrahi poets to choose a side, to overcome their victimized position and assume moral responsibility for victimizing both the Palestinians and for grappling with their own sense of Arabness. The resolution of their ambivalent ethical stand simultaneously opens up a poetic space that deals with the more delicate question of Mizrahi selfhood and cultural identity.

Conversing with Darwish and with his poetry, appears to be, in this sense, a marker of the impossibility of fully reconnecting with the lost Arabic past. For Shalom-Chetrit, Darwish provides a way to get in touch with his own displaced sense of identity; He embodies both a contact point and a limit, like a border between two worlds. It is his intimate connection to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the fact that so many of his works have been translated into Hebrew, his double position as belonging to the occupied Palestinian people, and to the wider 'free' Arabic world, and his worldwide success that makes him such an accessible contact point. However, he is also the marker of the abyss which lies between the Mizrahi poet and cultural Arabic heritage. Not only have second and third generation Mizrahi writers totally converted their writing language into Hebrew, but they are also already a product of a Zionist cultural habitus, and as such have adapted to the poetic and aesthetic norms whose origins are Eurocentric, norms that will promise them as wide as possible a readership.\textsuperscript{423}

The gap between the adoption of Hebrew as a normative language and between Shalom-Chetrit's estranged sense of identity, explains why language and the ability to articulate one's own selfhood are prominent themes within the poem discussed. The ability of the Hebrew language to truly voice and represent the speaker's Mizrahi selfhood is doubted. The signifiers seem altogether unable to produce a meaningful and coherent relationships between the self and the social world which surrounds him. Therefore, Shalom-Chetrit's poetic encounter with Darwish brings to the forefront the problematic status of Hebrew as his own unsatisfactory displaced language, in which the speaker is unable to accurately describe and represent his split Mizrahi identity. Shalom- Chetrit's encounter with Darwish's coherent language and images destabilizes

\textsuperscript{423} Levy, "Reorienting", 154-156.
his own Hebrew language, to the extent that Shalom-Chetrit’s ability to reference the cultural and social world collapses, pushing the speaker toward a phantasy of new, non-existing ties between signifier and signified.

It is interesting to further explore other, more subtle forms of Darwish's permeation into contemporary Mizrahi poetics; poetic ways by which he makes himself present not merely as a direct signifier, or an addressee, but as an influence and as an intertextual presence on the level of content, form or rhetoric structures. One of these possible ways is already revealed to us through Shalom-Chetrit's self-asserting declarative call: "Write it down". Indeed, the speech act of self-assertion: "Write it down, I am an Arab" invented by Darwish during the mid-sixties, in the face of Zionist oppression, had lately been reborn and reincarnated through current Mizrahi political and performative discourse with the subtle change: "Write it down, I am a Mizrahi".

With the establishment of the Ars-Poetica group and the revival of a self-liberating Mizrahi poetics, we might perhaps find that Mizrahi poets, in their quest to transcend their hybrid position, will embark upon an evolutionary journey, not unlike the one already paved by the late national Palestinian poet.\textsuperscript{424}

\textsuperscript{424} The Ars-Poetica group is a group of young Mizrahi poets established by the young poetess Adi Keissar in 2013. The name is a wordplay consisting of Horace's art of poetry and of the term \textit{ars}, whose meaning in Arabic is pimp, and that became in Israeli slang to be an offensive, vulgar description of Mizrahi men.
Conclusion

"Think of Others": Darwish's Early Quest for Poetic Autonomy

Through most of his poetic life, Darwish was preoccupied with the intricate relations between the poetic and the political. For him, it is only when the poetic is allowed some leverage, freed from the tyranny of the purely political, that its true transformative value – even its true politically transformative value – may be fully revealed. In one of his latest collections, *Almond Blossoms and Beyond*, Darwish crystalizes this relationship as he provides a minimalistic description of poetry's transformative power and its relationship to the political:

> As you liberate yourself in metaphor, think of others (those who have lost the right to speak)\(^{425}\)

According to these lines, it is through poetry that one may liberate himself, explore his own identity, and perhaps transcend it. However, the very ability to come up with these self-liberating metaphors is portrayed as a privileged state, not to be taken for granted. The poet, whose freedom to self-explore himself through words is evident here, must assume political responsibility for those who are denied the same right. He must moderate his fantastical poetic world, compromising, to use one of Freud's famous terms, his 'pleasure principle' for the ethics of the 'reality principle'. Indeed, these two lines present us with a perfect *mise-en-scène* of Darwish's existential state and poetic odyssey. Darwish discovered the freedom inherent in writing poetry at a very young age, but it was constantly confined by the walls of political reality and colonial trauma, so that poetry itself became the documentation of its own struggle to free

\(^{425}\) Darwish, *Almond Blossoms and Beyond*, 3.
the spirit of the self and of others from these external inhibitions and from the state of "those who have lost the right to speak".

Constantly negotiating the poetic and the political, Darwish's quest for the self-realization of his own autonomous 'governance of poetry' was extremely challenging. His poetic journey has often been compared to that of the classical Arab poet, al-Mutanabbi. Indeed, Darwish himself confessed his special admiration toward the pre-Islamic poet. Among other factors, it was al-Mutanabbi's special relationship with the Arab patrons of his time, and his utter refusal to accept any kind of limitations on his poetic autonomy which spoke so profoundly to Darwish:  

It is my opinion that al-Mutanabbi was not praising anyone. He wasn't praising the state's governance (sulṭah), but was rather constructing his own poetic regime. He was utilizing his poetic power in order to establish the governance of poetry…al-Mutanabbi is by no means a poet laureate; he embodies the governance of words, and every poet strives to establish his own aesthetic and linguistic governance, for if not, why is he writing at all?  

For Darwish, the task of achieving a poetic autonomy, a 'governance' of poetry, had been especially challenging during his early, formative phase of writing.  

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426 Mansson, *Passage to a New World*, 143-146. *Mansson* discusses the similarities between Darwish and al-Mutanabbi. She also discusses Darwish's poem in which he directly references al-Mutanabbi: "Al-Mutanabbi's Journey to Egypt".

427 Fatuh, "Iʻtirafat Mahmoud Darwish", 62, my translation.

428 By early phase I am referring to the poetry he had written during the 1960's and up to his departure of Palestine/Israel in 1971.
Palestinian national struggle, and by literary critics that bestowed 'harsh love' upon his poetry, ignoring their aesthetic complexity, and reading them reductively as simplistic 'resistance poetry'. Darwish's departure from Israel/Palestine in 1970 may have been a necessary move in the achievement of his poetic autonomy, for in his utter refusal to physically partake in the naturalized project of settler-colonial Israel, he was able to indeed liberate himself "in metaphors" from the narrow confines of the colonizer-colonized relationship, while never ceasing "thinking of others".

Countering scholarly neglect of Darwish's early fashioning of a poetic subjective Palestinian voice, this dissertation has reconsidered in detail his first poetry collection. In my interpretive insistence on highlighting the complex subjective poetic voice presented by Darwish, I merely brought to the forefront Darwish's own perseverance to poetically liberate the Palestinian Subject. As demonstrated by my close readings of the poems, Darwish's construction of this early Palestinian subjectivity transcended a dichotomous characterization of identity defined solely by its relationship vis-à-vis the Zionist colonial regime. To a large extent, this re-reading is a response to Fahri Saleh's appeal from the days of the second Palestinian Intifada in 2001. Observing that Palestinians were taking a renewed interest in the “Resistance Poetry” written by Darwish and his fellow poets during the 1960's, Saleh advocated for a particular mode of re-reading their works, especially Darwish's early poetics:

within [their] wider Arabic and global scope, that includes the general anti-colonial resistance, the struggle against settlements and occupation, as striving to locate the
Palestinian experience at the center of a deep humanist literature which narrates and
the intertwining occurrences of those who are oppressed upon this earth".429

My close readings of both his parody of Haim Nahman Bialik's poem, as well as his intertextual
dialogue with the poetics of T.S. Eliot are but two of the many intertextual references, both
Western and Arabic operating within the collection. From the presence of the Song of Songs in
his poem "A Hymn" (Nashidun Ma), through his reference to Kafka's short story "Jackals and
Arabs" referenced in his poem "Hope" (Amal), up to his obvious dialogue with Lorca in his
poem "Lorca", and his tribute to the poetry of Omar Khayyam in his "Rubaiyat", the Olive
Leaves poems are overloaded by intertextual references. The task of fully exposing this rich
intertextuality, and positioning it in relation to other forms of intertextual encounters taking place
during the 1960's in the general sphere of modern Arabic poetics is far from being exhausted.

Furthermore, this dissertation has only dealt with Darwish's first collection. A similar process of
re-evaluation should be carried out in relation to all of his early poetry, up until his departure to
exile from Palestine/Israel in 1970. For what holds true for the Olive Leaves poems holds even
truer in relation to his following collections: A Lover from Palestine (1966), The End of the Night
(1967), My Beloved Awakens (1969) and The Birds are Dying in the Galilee (1970). The full
picture of Darwish's poetic relationship with the poetics of Arab modernism, and his complex
fashioning of poetic Palestinian subjectivity will only be made possible through an examination
of the poetic processes which occur within these collections. This in turn will be achieved by a
close, deconstructive reading of these poems within the historical context of their composition.

429 Saleh, "al-Intifadah al-Filastiniah" (page number not mentioned since it is an online article).
Lastly, as Fahri reminds us, the reevaluation of Darwish's early resistance poetry is only part of yet a larger project, that of aesthetically reappraising the whole body of poetic work attributed to the Palestinian Resistance Poets.\(^4\)

**Transcending the Settler-Colonial: Darwish's Afterlife within Hebrew Israeli Culture**

The afterlife of "Identity Card" and of Mahmoud Darwish's presence within Israeli cultural and literary discourse has also been a major preoccupation of this thesis. Darwish's central presence within Israeli cultural and literary discourse, by way of public debate, translation, or as a literary influence, remains unprecedented. As thoroughly demonstrated in this dissertation, Darwish's presence constantly undermines the legitimacy of the settler-colonial Zionist project. It forces Israeli discourse to face its own haunting demons. Such is the case of the obsessive reoccurring Hebrew renditions of Darwish's poem "Identity-Card" discussed in the third chapter of the dissertation. The (mis)translations of the poem bear testimony to the inner doubts, and unsolved questions, which plague the discourse of settler-colonial Israel in relation to its violent foundational moment.

However, through these (mis)translations, and in encountering Darwish's presence, Israeli society is able not only to confront and re-negotiate its foundational colonial moment, but also to be momentarily reminded of other alternative ways of existence, getting a glimpse of what its

\(^4\) Saleh, "al-Intifadah al-Filastiniyah". This would also entail a reconsideration of the actual poets writing between 1948-1967 in Palestine. While Kanfani's book had canonized Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Kasem and Tawik Ziad as "the" Resistance Poets, other poets were thus marginalized. A rewriting of the poetic history of this period might also re-canonize some of these marginalized voices.
identity was like before its settler-colonial status was fully achieved, and imagining new ways in which it could exist in a de-colonized future. It is these kinds of possible remembrances and future envisioning that are enabled through the encounter with Darwish and with his poems. More profoundly then, Darwish offers Jewish Israelis an option for self-understanding, and to deconstruct their own colonial identity; in this last instance, following Bhabha, one may view Darwish's presence as an embodiment of an internal repressed voice within Israeli discourse.431

One example of such a deconstruction had been presented in this dissertation through the detailed exploration of Shalom-Chetrit's poetic dialogue with Darwish: "A Mural with no Wall: A Qasida for Mahmoud Darwish". In the poem, Darwish's presence and the numerous poetical references from his poems form the axis upon which Shalom-Chetrit's speaker performs his own Mizrahi identity deconstruction. Through this continuous dialogue, the speaker is able to finally articulate a new kind of Mizrahi diasporic Jewish identity, one that far transcends the confines of colonial Zionism.

Exploring Darwish as a source of direct and indirect influence within Mizrahi Hebrew poetry is an ongoing project. While there is at least one other Mizrahi poem which addresses Darwish directly, the real challenge is to decipher other, more subtle ways in which Darwish permeates Mizrahi cultural and poetic discourse.432 No doubt the rhetorical, declamatory mode of self-assertion, which Darwish initiated in "Identity Card" has been adapted and re-casted by Mizrahi poetics in playful adaptations such as Yossi Tzabari's "Tirshemiri" (briefly discussed in the introduction). However, other manifestations of such an influence are to be sought within the

431 Bhabha, Location, 162-166.
432 The poem addressed to Darwish is "Before the Siege and After", by the third generation Mizrahi poet Almog Bahar. It appears in his first collection of poems: Tsimaun Beerut.
poetry of the recently established group of Mizrahi poets *Ars-Poetica*, the poetic agenda of which is the liberation of Mizrahi cultural identity.\(^{433}\)

It is no coincidence that we find Darwish's indirect influence in the two most declamatory poems (representing the group's 'identity card', so to speak) written by two of the most central voices in the group, Adi Keissar and Roei Hassan.\(^{434}\) Keissar's poem, "I am the Mizrahi" (*Ani ha-Mizrahit*) narrates her confrontational anti-hegemonic, hybrid cultural position within her dominant Ashkenazi surrounding, and asserts her own Arabness within it.\(^{435}\) Interestingly, we find in the poem, the reoccurring anaphoric address: "So, what will you do to me?", who's structural equivalence to Darwish's anaphoric line within "Identity Card": "Are you angry?" is striking. Hassan's poem, which had become somewhat iconic, shares in the rhetoric of self-assertion, although he affords it an ironic twist declaring :

> In the state of Ashkenaz/ I am a Mofletah [a kind of Moroccan dish]/ I am a Haflah [Arabic word for party]/ I am Honor/ I am lazy/ I am everything that was never here before/ when everything was white…\(^{436}\)

However the opening of the second stanza already situates us within the realm of a much subtler intertextuality: "You (i.e.- the state) didn't see me when I walked on the water like Jesus/ Nor when I counted coins as you count stars/ Nor when I sprouted beans in cotton so as to learn/How

\(^{433}\) See f.n. 376.

\(^{434}\) Hassan's poem "Be-Medinat Ashkenaz" (In the State of Ashkenaz) had by far become the constituting poetic anthem of the group.

\(^{435}\) Keissar, *Shahor 'al Gabe Shahor*, 67-68. Here is the first stanza of the poem: I am the Mizrahi/ Whom you don't know/ I am the Mizrahi/ Whom you don't mention/ Who knows how to recite/ All of the poems/ By Zohar Argov/ And reads Albert Camus/ And Bolgakov/ Mixing it all on a small flame/ Milk and meat/ Black and white/ The fumes are poisoning/ Your/ Blue and white sky/ What will you do to me? (my translation).

\(^{436}\) Hassan, *Ha-Klavim she-Navhu be-Yaldutenu hayu Hasumei Pe*, 54, my translation.
I should grow”. Darwish's romantic imagery of the 'land' as a beloved is substituted here by Hassan's address to the feminized estranged 'state'. Might the image of the speaker as Jesus walking on the water correspond to Darwish's lines in Mural: "And as Christ walked on the lake / I walked in my vision"^438, thus creating a link between the way they both fantastically utilize Jesus's character as able to transcend the confines of reality?

Notwithstanding these aesthetic and thematic similarities, it is important to observe that the difference between Hassan's ironic stance toward the 'state' and Darwish's pathetic notion of the 'land' stems from their different historical subject positioning. While Hassan's addressee is the estranged, racist "state" of Ashkenaz, Darwish's addressee is his own beloved "land". Hassan's alienation toward the "state", has nothing to do with the romantic notion of Darwish's lost unification with the "land". This explains why while Darwish's speaker's roots "Took firm hold before the birth of time, Before the beginning of the ages, Before the cypress and olives", Hassan's speaker's, lacking a long-term sense of belonging to Israeli landscape must produce his own very private self-made model of land and self-growth, embodied in the image of sprouting beans within cotton.^439

How much of Darwish's 'essential strategy' of poetics might we find within the poetics of the Ars-Poetica group? How much of his more subtle complex imagery permeates their poems?

How are aesthetic epistemological poetic sites of meaning fashioned by Darwish such as Exile,

^437 Hassan, Ha-Klavim, 55, my translation.

^438 Darwish, If I were, 139.

^439 By association, Hassan's use of cotton references the labor of African-American slaves within the cotton fields. More importantly, however, his position resembles Chetrit's speaker position (analyzed in Chapter 4), where, unlike Darwish, he lacks a geo-historical connection of unity to the land of Israel/Palestine.
Arabness, The Lost Paradise of Andalusia present in Mizrahi literature? May we then begin to explore the possibility of a Mizrahi-Palestinian joint, Hebrew-Arabic hybrid poetics within Hebrew literature, in which Darwish's presence acts as a major source of influence? Beyond the afterlife of Darwish's "Identity Card's" these questions await an answer. Outlining the characteristics of a Palestinian-Mizrahi poetics that operates in and outside the space of settler-colonial Israel, destabilizing its definitions, should be an important task to those who, like Levy, wish to present an alternative to the monolingual, Eurocentric model of Hebrew literature, and replace it with a notion of a multi-lingual literature.440

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