

## FOLK LITERATURE IN MAḤMŪD DARWĪŠ'S POETRY

HUSSEIN HAMZAH\*

*Maḥmūd Darwīš (1941-2008) used various folkloristic elements in his poetic oeuvre: proverbs, songs and sayings. The present article will strive to explain the significance of this use of folklore by Darwīš, the extent to which he used it, and the stages in his poetic career in which he used it. In order to answer such questions, we use a diachronic perspective of Darwīš's poetry, on the one hand, and analyze the artistic and ideological significance of his use of folk literature, on the other.*

*Our study found that Darwīš's use of the three afore-mentioned forms of folk literature was most prominent during the first stage of his poetic career, which lasted from 1960, the year in which he published his first poetry collection, 'Aṣāfir bi-lā aḡniḥah (Wingless Birds), until 1970, the year in which he left the country. His poetry during that period was characterized by direct rhetoric and direct expression of the people's concerns. His use of folklore during that period thus made artistic sense, and gave realism to the contents of his works.*

Folk literature belongs to the type considered “non-canonical”, that is, it is a literature that lacks the “legitimacy” of official or “canonical” literature<sup>1</sup>. The latter's canonicity, in Arabic, derives from the fact that it is written in the standard language, the language of the Quran. Folk literature, on the other hand, has usually been dismissed because it is not couched in the language of the Quran, and therefore lacks sanctity.

However, a realistic view of language forces us to recognize that it consists of several levels. No language is completely uniform. Rather, there are numerous levels, whose nature depends first and foremost on the sender and the receiver, as well as on the language's discursive mechanisms and its many functions, one of which is intercommunication among its speakers (Sabīlā, al-'Alī 1998: 50-55). Furthermore, according to de Saussure there is a clear difference between the relatively stable written language and the dynamic spoken language (Murtāḍ 1994: 13). In fact, what characterizes Arabic is not levels of linguistic usage but a state of diglossia (al-Ḥūlī 1986: 17-26).

The introduction of the colloquial into the classical language, or of folklore into modern Arabic poetry, occurred simultaneously with the emergence of the “free verse” movement in the mid-twentieth century, in keeping with

\* The Academic Arab College for Education, Haifa.

<sup>1</sup> See: Snir 1998: 90-911, 107; Cachia 1967: 13, 21; Şīmāḥ 1995: 81; Moreh 1976: 285-286; Khoury 2006b: 114-120; Badīr 1986: 15-18.

rebellious nature of modern poets, who championed change and a closer connection to the lives of the people. This was also a period in which realism became the dominant trend in literature. As a result, the use of colloquial expressions or elements of folklore in canonical literature was no longer seen in a negative light, since the latter was no longer considered “superior” in relation to “inferior” folk literature. As Ğubrān notes: «Drawing from folk sayings, which was a rare phenomenon in Arabic poetry at that time, in the 1920s and 1930s, became common among many Palestinian poets after Ṭūqān, so much so that it can be considered, as we noted above, one of the characteristics of Palestinian poetry in general» (Ğubrān 2006: 73). He also speaks of the meaning of folk intertextuality<sup>2</sup>: «Most of these striking allusions are syntactic structures, in some of which the poet made changes towards the standard language in order to adapt them to the new poetic context, or they are constructions whose elements are shared by the standard and the colloquial language, but their political meanings are those of the colloquial» (Ğubrān 2006: 74).

In addition, the words differ «in the power with which they are stored in collective memory. The poet makes use of this store in order to enrich his text and charge it with suggestive energy» ('Azzām 2003: 119).

al-Šabbāġ, too, notes that «the use of the language of everyday life aims at a specific meaning, conveys feelings incapable of being conveyed by the sedate standard language, and provides an opportunity to express matters for which the latter is insufficient, including folk concepts» (al-Šabbāġ 1998: 141). In other words, according to al-Šabbāġ Standard Arabic, which he calls «sedate», is occasionally incapable of expressing what is needed. Colloquial Arabic must thus be considered a language in its own right. Dismissing the latter would involve a cognitive split between Standard Arabic as used by Arabs, and a colloquial language in which Arabs think and which they translate into Standard Arabic when they write. al-Šabbāġ associates this with the nature of contemporary culture:

The life of the common man, as life becomes more complex and human life evolves, has come to dominate reality. As a result, common man, or more correctly contemporary man, in every meaning of the term “contemporary”, is the receiver of poetry, and at the same time also its producer. Therefore, it has become necessary for the language of poetry to express the emotions of this contemporary man and the totality of his life and his dreams (al-Šabbāġ 1998: 146-147).

Maḥmūd Darwīš used popular proverbs, songs and sayings, especially in the early part of his career, what I have called the *stage of connection*<sup>3</sup>, in which

<sup>2</sup> On intertextuality, see: Kristeva 1980: 66.

<sup>3</sup> Darwīš poetry can be divided into three periods. I call the first period (1960-1970) the *stage of connection*. During this period Darwīš belonged to the Roman-

he attempted through them to revive and preserve the features of his identity and his existence on his soil. Perhaps they also served a non-literary purpose, as noted by Ilyās Ḥūrī: «They play a special role in political activity» (Ḥūrī 1995: 204). However, an examination of the overall uses of folkloristic allusions in Darwīš's poetry reveals that it was in general limited to the first stage of his career, and even then he did not use them very often. It appears in «a restricted range of the poet's extensive work, especially in the early stages of his poetic oeuvre, represented by the following works: *Awraq al-zaytūn* (Leaves of Olives), *ʿĀšiq min Filasṭīn* (A Lover from Palestine) and *Āḥir al-layl* (The

---

tic movement within contemporary Arabic poetry. His models at this time were poets such as Badr Šākīr al-Sayyāb (1926-1964) and Nizār Qabbānī (1932-1998). This was a period when his poetry was dominated by *direct speech* and the use of stylistic devices such as intertextuality or historical symbolism, masks, and the like, that served the content of his message. His political and ideological views were very apparent in his verses: during this period he was a member of the Communist Party and believed that literature should be mobilized for the cause. Among the characteristics of this stage were the poet's use of the traditional *qaṣīdah* form and his ideological commitment. During the *stage of connection* Darwīš's poetry was dominated by Marxist ideology. I call the second period (1970-1983) the *stage of con-disconnection*. This was an interim period in which some features of the previous stage were retained, especially the use of the first person plural in the poetic discourse, and the effects this had at the formal level. However, at this stage the poet expanded his semantic range and extended his interests beyond the ideological dimension. He also expanded the use he made of references to history, religion, myth, literature and culture. His poetic texts became filled with stylistic and intertextual signals. Symbols borrowed from Christian and Jewish culture are clearly evident in this period. It is quite likely that the poet's emigration from Israel played a role in this development. His absence from his homeland sharpened his vision and made him cognizant of the concept of exile in a way that is rarely found so well-developed and complex in the works of any other poet. His liberated encounter with the world and with Arab civilization left its traces on his poetry, in which he interacted with both cultures in a creative way. After Darwīš left Israel and began to pay more attention to the aesthetics of his poetic writings we find a kind of hesitation, as if he were in hiding. The identity that Darwīš developed in the third period is latent in the second period but can be seen in his gradual but clear move away from the first person plural and the collective voice and towards his beloved, in a move from objectivism to subjectivism, despite the possibility of interpreting the lover in the poem as an image representing the soil and the homeland. Among the characteristics of this stage are an effective use of symbolism and religious and mythical intertextuality, both of which constitute part of Darwīš's turn away from directness towards suggestiveness. After all, intertextuality is an indirect stylistic device. The third period (1983-2008) is called the *stage of disconnection*, by which I mean that the poet detached himself gradually but clearly and consciously from direct ideological discourse in his poetry. It is possible that the exodus of the Palestinian leadership

End of the Night)» (Abū Ḥaḍrah 2001: 147). According to Abū Ḥaḍrah, folkloristic allusions served the following purposes during this period:

1. Maintaining artistic communication with readers.
2. Recording the life of the common people.
3. Avoiding unclarity (Abū Ḥaḍrah 2001: 148).

Ġubrān confirmed the first of these aims, noting that folkloristic allusions «are closer to the common man, to whom most of them will be familiar, so that the reader and the text can interact during the act of reading. For the reader's participation in "creating" the text is important for the best utilization of intertextuality» (Ġubrān 2006: 85). This usage may be considered a stylistic feature of Darwīš's poetry in his *stage of connection*, one which contributed to the development of his poetic language (Abū Ḥaḍrah 2001: 155).

---

from Beirut in 1982 made Darwīš despair of Arab nationalism in which he believed in the second stage. Among the characteristic features of this stage are the following: *Line length*: In the first two stages the lines of his poems were quite short as a rule while in the stage of disconnection they are relatively long. As an example of this we may take his collection *Ward aqall* (Fewer Roses, 1985), consisting of poems of ten lines, all nearly of the same length, suggesting the prose form. I believe that the length of the verses helps to slow down the poem's pace and so contributes to its indirectness. In this way the poet attempted to create a balance between the historicity of "metric" poetry and the possibilities offered by "prose" poetry. In this last stage, Darwīš tried to write poems in such a way that the reader was induced to believe that it was not subject to restrictions of meter. *Many long poems*: In this stage Darwīš composed numerous long poems, in contrast to the first stage, in which poems of this kind are absent. Such long poems make it easier to present the desired content in detail, and the details in turn reduce the poem's rhetorical qualities, with the exception of the lyrical drama in *Madīḥ al-zill al-'ālī* (A Eulogy for the Tall Shadow, 1983) which was written in response to the Palestinian exodus from Beirut. It also helps the poet to ponder over his themes, thus enhancing the subjective element. This can be seen in his poem *Ma'sāt al-narġīs, malhāt al-fiddāh* (Tragedy of Daffodils, Comedy of Silver) in the collection *Arā mā urīd* (I See What I Want, 1990), in *Ġidāriyyah* (Mural, 2000), and in *Hālat ḥiṣār* (State of Siege, 2002). *Dialogue*: Dialogue occurs very frequently at this stage, in poems and in collections, for example *Li-māḍā tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīd<sup>an</sup>?* (Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?, 1995) and *La ta'taḍīr 'ammā fa'alta* (Do Not Apologize for What You Did, 2004). Dialogue, basically a narrative technique, helps slow down the poem's external pace and give it a calmer and deeper nature. Frequent use of religious and mythological *intertextuality*, in addition to intertextuality associated with foreign names. The use of intertextuality as a technical device in Darwīš's poems also had the effect of reducing their lyricism, since it constitutes an indirect expression of an occurrence. References to texts that are largely of prose reduce direct speech; in other words, intertextuality of this kind requires a process of successive readings in order to arrive at the literary meaning.

Darwīš in his poetry used folkloristic allusions in a number of forms, mainly folk proverbs, folk sayings and folksongs. Proverbs are «a synopsis of popular experience and knowledge»<sup>4</sup>, and below we see the use which Darwīš made of such a proverb in his poem *Ḥubb fī 'l- 'īd* (Love in the Holiday), which appeared in his first poetry collection, *'Aṣāfir bi-lā aḡnihah* (Wingless Birds, 1960):

صمنا وأفطرنا على أمل اللقاء.. وما تفتح  
ما زال وعدًا.. فكرة.. وصدى مجرّح  
[...]  
والعيد موعنا.. وجاء العيد، لكن مضمحل  
شفناك لم تطفأ على شفتي.. لم نفطر فُبل

We fasted and broke our fast on the hope of meeting... but it did not happen  
It remains a promise... a thought... an unreliable echo  
[...]  
The holiday is our appointed time... but the holiday came and faded away  
Your lips were not smothered on mine... we did not break the fast before  
(Darwīš 1960: 82).

In this text the poet alludes to the folk saying: «He fasted and fasted, and broke his fast on an onion» (said of someone who misses an opportunity in the hope of a better one, but is disappointed) (Lūbānī 1999: 464). Here the poet has made the hope of an encounter into something unwanted, because his aim was to meet his beloved. The promise is thus compared to an onion, and the use of the saying is ironic.

In the poem *Wa 'āda fī kafn* (And He Returned in a Shroud), from his poetry collection *Awrāq al-zaytūn* (1964), the poet describes a Palestinian's return to his mother as a corpse:

قلبي عليه في غوائل الدروب!  
قلبي عليك يا فتى.. يا ولداه

My heart goes out to him on the dangers of the roads!  
My heart goes out to you, my boy... O my child (Darwīš 1989: 21).

These lines allude to the proverb «My heart goes out to my child, and my child's heart goes out to a stone» (said of parents who care for their children, but their children do not care for them) (Lūbānī 1999: 605). In the allusion, the poet changed the proverb's meaning: here the son's heart went out to the homeland.

In the poem *Nāy* (Flute) in the collection *'Āṣiq min Filasṭīn* (1966) we read:

<sup>4</sup> See: Nāyif 2002: 404; J. Khoury 2006a: 95-96.

لا تقتلونني أيها الرعاة  
لا تعزفوا  
خافوا عليّ الله  
أستحلف الفحيح أن ينام  
في ألسنتكم..  
حتى أمر في سلام

Do not kill me, o shepherds  
Do not play your instrument  
Fear God for me  
I entreat the hiss to sleep  
In your melodies...  
So that I will pass in peace (Darwīš 1989: 125).

Here the allusion is to the folk saying: «Fear him who does not fear God» (Lūbānī 1999: 133). The poet entreats the shepherds, who perhaps symbolize the forces of oppression. In the present text the poet reverses the meaning of playing the flute, from something romantic into a hiss. Furthermore, the fact that the poet has to entreat them not to kill him is proof of their evil nature.

In the poem *Mazāmīr* (Psalms) in the poetry collection *Uḥibbuk aw lā uḥibbuk* (I Love You I Love You Not, 1972) Darwīš uses an encoded allusion:

وعندما التفَّ حبل المشنقة حول عنقي  
كرهت أعدائي كثيرًا  
لأنهم سرقوا ربطة عنقي!

And when the hanging rope was wrapped around my neck  
I hated my enemies very much  
Because they had stolen my necktie! (Darwīš 1989: 397).

The allusion here is to the proverb: «The camel was lost, and he looks for the halter» (used of someone who focuses on an unimportant detail)<sup>5</sup>. The poet is about to be hanged, yet what worries him is his necktie.

In the poem *'Awdat al-asīr* (The Prisoner's Return) in the collection *Muḥāwalat raqm 7* (Attempt No. 7, 1973) we read:

سبحان الذي يعطي ويأخذ!  
ليس من عادات هذا النيل أن يصغي إلى أحدٍ  
كأنَّ النيل تمثالٌ من الماء استراح إلى الأبد

Praised be He who gives and takes!  
This Nile is not in the habit of listening to anyone  
As if the Nile were a statue of water that took a break forever  
(Darwīš 1989: 572).

<sup>5</sup> This proverb is not mentioned in Lūbānī 1999.

Here Darwīš alludes to the saying: «God has given and God has taken» (Lūbānī 1999: 87). Its use constitutes direct intertextuality, in an ironic relation with the poem's title. For the title refers to return, while the Nile rejects it, because it is a statue that does not listen, having been deprived of its metaphorical humanity.

In the poem *Ta'ammulāt fī madīnah qadīmah wa ġamīlah 'alā sāhil al-Baḥr al-Abyaḍ al-Mutawassiṭ* (Contemplations of an Old and Beautiful City on the Shore of the Mediterranean Sea) in the collection *Ḥiṣār li-madā'ih al-baḥr* (Siege of the Eulogies for the Sea, 1984) we read:

ثابتٌ هذا الزوال،  
زائلٌ هذا الثباتُ  
”والذي أعرفه أجهله“  
”والذي أجهله أعرفه“، بعد الأوان

This coming to an end is enduring  
This enduring comes to an end  
What I know I do not know  
And what I do not know I know (Darwīš 1989: 151-152).

The poet here alludes to the proverb: «What you know you don't know» (al-Yūsuf 2002: 71). The poet uses the technique of intertextual reversal and antithesis in order to express irony, since he will only know after the time has come to an end. This text appears to express a kind of self-criticism.

In the poem *Šahādah min Bīrtūl Brīht amāma maḥkamah 'askariyyah* (Bertold Brecht's Testimony before a Court Martial) in the collection *Li-māḍā tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīd<sup>an</sup>* we read:

ويُطلُّون على قلبي، ويرمون قشورَ الموز  
في البئر. ويمضون أمامي مسرعين  
ويقولون: مساء الخير، أحياناً.  
ويأتون إلى باحة بيتي... هادئين  
وينامون على غيمة تومي... أمنين

They look down on my heart and throw banana peels  
Into the well. They pass before me in a hurry  
And say “Good evening”, sometimes.  
They come into the hall of my house, calmly  
And sleep on the cloud of my sleep, in safety (Darwīš 1995: 152).

Here Darwīš alludes to the popular saying «He drinks from the well and throws a stone into it»<sup>6</sup>. This allusion constitutes a denial of what is right, of the wrongs suffered by the poet, who is “appropriated” by the judges' subjects in the present text, who do wrong/muddy the waters of the well, the source of life, as if nothing happened. They sleep calmly, at peace with their

<sup>6</sup> It is mentioned neither by Lūbānī 1999 nor by al-Yūsuf 2002.

wrongdoing. Another popular saying is: «Do not leave the wrongdoing of the wrongdoer intact» (Lübānī 1999: 502), which highlights the paradox involved in the evocation of the former proverb.

In the collection *Hālat ḥiṣār* we read:

نُخَزِّنُ أَحْزَانَنَا فِي الْجَرَارِ، لئَلَّا  
يرأها الجنودُ فيجتفلوا بالحصار...  
نُخَزِّنُهَا لِمَوَاسِمِ أُخْرَى،  
لذِكْرِي،  
لشيء يفاجئنا في الطريق "

We store our griefs in jars, so that  
The soldiers will not see them and rejoice in the siege...  
We store them for another *mawsim* (festive season)  
As a memory  
As something that will surprise us on the road (Darwīš 2002: 39).

Darwīš here alludes to the saying: «Put grief in a jar» (Lübānī 1999: 307). The original saying refers to a grief that becomes worse, so that its basic meaning is pessimistic. However, in the present text, the poet uses the verb *ḥazzana* (store), which has the affirmative meaning of preserving something, but is here given a negative connotation. Storing grief until the next *mawsim* may express irony, since the usual meaning of this word is “festive season”. Here the poet once again uses the technique of intertextual reversal.

In the poem *Laysa li 'l-Kurdī illā al-rīḥ* (The Kurd Has Only the Wind) in the collection *Lā ta 'taḍīr 'ammā fa 'alta*, which the author dedicated to the Kurdish novelist Salīm Barakāt, we read:

منزلُهُ نظيفٌ مثلُ عَيْنِ الديك...  
منسيٌّ كخيمة سيد القوم الذين  
تبعثروا كالريش. سَجَادٌ من الصوف  
المجعد. مُعْجَمٌ مُتَاكِلٌ.

His house is clean like a rooster's eye...  
Forgotten like the tent of the chief of a people who  
Dispersed like feathers. A woolen prayer rug,  
Creased, obscure, worn (Darwīš 2004: 160).

Here there is a direct allusion to the saying: «Like a rooster's eye», as an expression of limpidity. However, this colloquial expression is used to describe a Standard Arabic linguistic structure that has a colloquial meaning, and has not achieved the status of a proverb in the popular collective mind.

In the poem *Wa 'āda fī kafn* in the collection *Awraq al-zaytūn* we read:



لم يعرف الغزل  
غير أغاني مطرب ضيّعه المل  
ولم يقل لحلوة: الله!  
إلا مرتين!

He did not know how to court  
Except the songs of a singer ruined by boredom  
And did not say to a sweet girl: By God!  
Except for two times! (Darwīš 1989: 19).

The phrase «By God!» is used in the colloquial to express wonder or admiration. In Standard Arabic it is used similarly. Here the poet uses it in an ironic sense, because the dead man whom he describes cannot enjoy his youth, as indicated by the fact that it was only said «two times».

In the same poetry collection, in the poem *al-Ḥuzn wa 'l-ḡaḍab* (Grief and Rage) we read:

الصوت في شفتيك لا يُطربُ  
والنار في رنتيك لا تُغلبُ  
وأبو أبيك على حذاء مهاجرٍ يُصلبُ

The voice in your lips does not sing  
The fire in your lungs cannot be overcome  
Your father's father is crucified on the shoe of an emigrant (Darwīš 1989: 57).

The expression «your father's father» is a colloquial usage which evokes irony, because he is crucified on the shoe of an emigrant. The expression in the present text alludes to steadfastness and taking root. This common denominator between the colloquial language and Standard Arabic may point to the bitterness felt by the poet or, as he put it in the poem's title, «grief and rage», which are the two main themes of this poem.

In the same collection, in the poem *Rubā 'iyyāt* (Quatrains) we read:

حُبْنَا أن يضغطَ الكفُّ على الكفِّ، ونمشي  
وإذا جعنا تقاسمنا الرغيفُ..  
في ليالي البردِ أحملكِ برمشي  
وبأشعارٍ على الشمسِ تطوفُ!

Our love is one hand pressing the other and we walk  
And when we're hungry we share bread..  
In the cold of night I protect you with eyelashes  
And with hair roaming on the sun! (Darwīš 1989: 66).

The expressions «one hand pressing the other» and «sharing bread» point to a warm relationship. The first implies support and the second fondness.

In the poem *Ḥawāṭir fī šāri'* (Thoughts in a Street) in the collection *'Āšiq min Filasṭīn* we read:

لكنهم رقصوا وغنوا فوق قبرك..  
فلتتم  
صاح أنا.. صاح أنا.. صاح أنا  
حتى العدم

But they danced and sang over your grave..  
May you sleep  
I am awake, I am awake, I am awake  
Until non-existence (Darwīš 1989: 122).

The expression «danced and sang» implies derision in this case, likewise the thrice-repeated exclamation «I am awake», in view of the final phrase «until non-existence», which can be associated with sleep or annihilation, but certainly not with being awake.

In the poem *Rītā wa 'l-bunduqiyyah* (Rita and the Gun) in the collection *Āḥir al-layl* (The End of the Night, 1967) uses the style of folktales that begin with the sentence *Kān yā mā kān* (Once upon a time):

كان يا ما كان  
يا صمت العشيّة  
قمري هاجر في الصبح بعيداً  
في العيون العسليّة

Once upon a time  
O silence of evening  
My moon emigrated far away in the morning  
In honey-colored eyes (Darwīš 1989: 193-194).

The poet's evocation of the formula that introduces folktales shows how important his beloved is for him, since by doing so he turns her into a story to be told (al-Šamādī 2001: 146). The use of this formula may indicate that the poet transferred his perception of his beloved from a state of present actuality, namely his love for Rita, to a ritual state as represented by the story formula «Once upon a time».

In the poem *Lawḥah 'alā 'l-ġidār* (Picture on the Wall) in the collection *Aṣāfir tamūt fī 'l-Ġalīl* (Birds Are Dying in Galilee, 1970) we read:

ليلة تمضي، ولا تأخذ من عالمنا  
غير شكل الموت  
في عزّ الظهيرة

Night passes, and does not take anything from our world  
Except for the form of death  
At the height of noon (Darwīš 1989: 251).

The contrast between «night» and «height of noon», in addition to time's refusal to accede to the poet's ego, by not taking anything from the world except for the clear form of death, makes the present text ironic.

In the poem *Tadbīr manzilī* (Housekeeping) in the collection *Sarīr al-ġarībah* (A Strange Woman's Bed, 1999) we read:

[...] إن لم تجدني  
أرقت عليك، فلا تخش ضعفت الهواء  
...وئنم يا حبيبي نوم الهنا

[...] If you do not find me  
I will fly over you. Do not fear the weakness of the air  
Sleep, my beloved, the sleep of well-being... (Darwīš 1999: 69).

The expression «sleep of well-being» testifies to a profound and trustful relationship, for sleep by its very nature involves abandoning the body and the spirit. This can only be done in a trusting context. In the present text, the beloved woman's speech to the poet may refer to this. The use of this expression is a direct corresponding intertextuality.

In the poem *Qul mā tašā'* (Say What You Want) in the collection *Lā ta'taḍīr 'ammā fa'alta* we read:

قل ما تشاء. ضع النقاط على الحروف.  
ضع الحروف مع الحروف لتولد الكلمات،  
غامضة وواضحة، وبيدئ الكلام.

Say what you want. Put the dots on the letters.  
Put the letters together to form words,  
Obscure and clear, and speech will begin (Darwīš 2004: 95).

The expression «put the dots on the letters» means to clarify. In the present text, however, the poet repeats this and then makes words «obscure and clear». This constitutes a change in the level of meaning, between the present and absent texts, for the absent text denotes clarity, while the present text denotes optionality. The poet here thus uses the style of antithesis, contrasting the obscure with the clear.

Folksongs come in a variety of forms, such as *tarwīd*, *tahlīl*, *'atābā*, *yādī*, *hidā'* and others<sup>7</sup>. The spread of *zaġal* (strophic poetry) and *mawwāl* (colloquial song) forms in Palestinian folksongs «affected Darwīš's poetry, which became prosaic, or nearly so» (Šimāḥ 1995: 201).

Darwīš used the *mawwāl* form in the poem *Mawwāl*, in the collection *Āḥīr al-layl*:

<sup>7</sup> See: Milḥam 2000: 9-28.

"يَمَّا.. مويل الهوى  
 "يَمَّا.. مويلًا  
 "ضرب الخناجر... ولا  
 "حكم النذل فيا"

Mother ... the *mawwāl* of love  
 Mother ... this is my *mawwāl*  
 [I'd rather] be stabbed by a dagger than  
 Being ruled by the despicable (Darwīš 1989: 184).

This *mawwāl* is repeated four times in the poem, and constitutes its ending. The number four may connote completion. The poet prefers death to being ruled by evil. In the poem he compares his mother to the soil:

الأرض، أم أنت عندي – أم أنتما توأمان  
 من مدَّ للشمس زندي؟ - الأرض، أم مقلتان  
 سبان سبان... عندي

The soil, are you with me or are the two of you twins  
 Who stretched my arm to the sun? – The soil, or two eyes  
 Both are the same to me (Darwīš 1989: 185).

The poet, by using the *mawwāl* form as a standing phrase in the poem, goes beyond being a run-of-the-mill evoker and speaker, by his unique poetics that gives the stanza, the standing phrase, a semantic richness in its present use, as it appears in the poetic context. For the stanza's structure deepens the philosophy of steadfastness and resistance, of death and sacrifice, in the poem, in which the true meaning of the mother is intertwined with the meaning of the metaphorical mother, the soil (Abū Ḥaḍrah 2001: 149).

An examination of the poem's words reveals that most of them belong to the semantic field of the soil, for example «lilies», «gardens», «jasmine», «sheaves», «roses», «streets», «soil».

In the poem *Yaḥīr al-ḥamām* (The Doves Fly) in the collection *Hiṣār li-madā`ih al-baḥr* there is an allusion to the popular chant *Fly and slow down o doves*, a phrase uttered at weddings, when the guests line up and march in time to this chant.

Darwīš used the chant twelve times in his poem. However, he used the form «the doves fly / the doves descend» nine times, followed by «and the doves flew / and the doves flew», then «the doves fly / the doves fly».

The repetition of this chant twelve times alludes to a full circle, which in turn connotes freedom. While the poem begins with «The doves fly / the doves descend» (Darwīš 1994: 171), it ends with «The doves fly / the doves fly» (Darwīš 1994: 179).

The poet moves from hesitation at the beginning to certainty and continuation at the end, using the repeated imperfect form of the verb *fly*. In other

words, the ending is optimistic. In the poem the homeland and the beloved are intertwined:

- أعدّي لي الأرض كي أستريح  
فإني أحبك حتى التعب...  
صباحك فاكهة للأغاني  
وهذا المساء ذهب

Prepare for me the soil so I can rest  
For I love you to weariness...  
Your morning is fruit for songs  
And this evening is gold (Darwīš 1994: 171).

Another kind of repetition in the poem is that of single letters, in particular the letter /r/, which occurs 120 times. This may be a reference to the cooing sound of doves, which in the colloquial is called *barraq*, here perhaps in identification with the dove as a symbol of freedom:

إلى أين تأخذني يا حبيبي من والدي  
ومن شجري، من سريري الصغير ومن ضجري،  
ومن مراياي ومن قمري، ومن خزانة عمري ومن سهري،  
من ثيابي ومن خفري؟

*Ilà ayna ta 'ḥudunī yā ḥabībī min wālidayya*  
*Wa min šağarī, min sarīrī al-šağīr wa min ḍağarī*  
*Wa min marāyāya wa min qamarī, wa min ḥazānat 'umrī wa min saharī*  
*Min ṭiyābī wa min ḥafarī?*

Where will you take me, my love, from my parents  
From my trees, from my small bed and from my discontent  
From my mirrors and my moon, from the store of my life and from my sleep-  
lessness  
From my clothes and from my shyness? (Darwīš 1994: 173).

We also note the influence which the strophic *zağal* form of folk poetry has on Darwīš's rhymes, especially quatrains in which «there are four lines, three of which rhyme together» (Hāfiẓ 1988: 92).

In the poem *Ağānī al-asīr* (The Prisoner's Songs) in the collection *'Ašīq min Filasṭīn* we read:

ملوحيّة، يا مناديل حبي  
عليك السلام!  
تقولين أكثر مما يقول  
هديل الحمام  
وأكثر من دمع  
خلف جفن.. ينام  
على حلم هارب!

Waving, o handkerchiefs of my love  
 Peace be on you (*al-salām*)  
 You say more than says  
 The cooing of the doves (*al-ḥamām*)  
 And more than a tear that  
 Behind an eyelid... sleeps (*yanām*)  
 On a fleeing dream (Darwīš 1989: 93).

In the preceding passage, the second, fourth and fifth lines rhyme. This pattern, which occurs in some types of folk poems of the *zağal* form, helps the poet communicate with his readers.

Darwīš also borrows the octet form with two interweaving rhymes (Ḥāfiẓ 1988: 110).

He uses this form in the poem *Qaṣīdat Bayrūt* (Poem of Beirut) in the collection *Ḥiṣār li-madā'ih al-baḥr*:

قَمْرٌ عَلَى بُعْلَبَكْ  
 وَدَمٌّ عَلَى بَيْرُوتْ  
 يَا حَلُو، مِنْ صَبَبِكْ  
 فَرَسًا مِنَ الْيَاقُوتِ!  
 قَل لِي، وَمِنْ كَبَبِكْ،  
 نَهْرَيْنِ فِي تَابُوتِ!  
 يَا لَيْتَ لِي قَلْبِكْ  
 لِأَمُوتَ حِينَ أَمُوتْ

A moon over Baalbek (*Ba'albak*)  
 And blood over Beirut (*Bayrūt*)  
 How delightful, who cast you (*ṣabbak*)  
 A knight of sapphire (*yāqūt*)  
 Tell me, and who toppled you (*kabbak*)  
 Two rivers in an ark (*tābūt*)  
 I wish I had your heart (*qalbak*)  
 So that I die when I die (*amūt*) (Darwīš 1994: 206).

Darwīš used such quick rhythms in various forms throughout the rather lengthy *Qaṣīdat Bayrūt*. These rhythms create stanzas which brake the monotonous atmosphere of pessimism which dominates the poem. In the present passage the poet thus looks at the moon and addresses it as if it were a person. Gazing at the moon may symbolize flight from earthly reality and its pressures. The poem wishes that he would possess the moon's heart, so that he could die in peace «when I die».

To conclude, Darwīš used folk intertextuality in all stages of his poetic career, especially linguistic shifts between Standard Arabic and the colloquial language, as well as the rhythmic *zağal* form. However, his use of folk proverbs and folksongs was limited to the first two phases of his career. This would indicate that such usage was associated with the poet's ideological po-

sitions, since folk proverbs and folksongs are basic components of the emotional life of the masses. Their use thus facilitated the rhetorical communication between the poet and his readers, as a general feature of the direct and exhortative nature of Darwīš's poetry in the first stage of his writing. In fact, more than half of all the examples we quoted in the present study were used in an ideological context. Darwīš was thus clearly at first influenced by popular culture, which he turned into an artistic device in his poems, but it was not the main foundation on which his poetics were built.

### References

- Abū Ḥadrah, Sa'īd (2001), *Ṭaṭawwur al-dalālāt al-luġawiyyah fī šī'r Maḥmūd Darwīš*, al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah li 'l-Dirāsāt wa 'l-Našr, 'Ammān.
- Allen, G. (2003), *Intertextuality*, Routledge, London-New York.
- 'Azzām, Muḥammad (2002), *Tahlīl al-ḥiṭāb al-adabī*, Ittihād al-Kuttāb al-'Arab, Dimašq.
- Badīr, Ḥilmī (1986), *Aṭar al-adab al-ša'bī fī 'l-adab al-ḥadīṭ*, Dār al-Ma'ārif, al-Qāhirah.
- Ballas, S.; Snir, R. (eds.) (1998), *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*, York Press, Toronto.
- Cachia, P. (1967), *The Use of Colloquial in Modern Arabic Literature*, in "Journal of American Oriental Society", 87, 1 (Jan.-Mar.), pp. 2-22.
- Darwīš, Maḥmūd (1960), *'Ašāfir bi-lā aġniḥah*, Maṭba'at Kūmartas'īl, 'Akkā.
- Id. (1994), *al-A'māl al-kāmilah*, 2 vols, Dār al-'Awdah, Bayrūt.
- Id. (1995), *Li-mādā tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīd<sup>an</sup>*, Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, Lundun.
- Id. (2002), *Ḥālat ḥiṣār*, Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, Bayrūt.
- Id. (2004), *Lā ta'taḍīr 'ammā fa'alta*, Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, Bayrūt.
- Ġubrān, Sulaymān (2006), *Naṣrah ġadīdah 'alā 'l-šī'r al-filasṭīnī fī 'ahd al-intidāb*, Manšūrāt al-Karmil, Ḥayfā.
- Ḥāfiṣ, Mūsā (1988), *Funūn al-zaġal al-ša'bī al-filasṭīnī*, s.l.
- al-Ḥūlī, Muḥammad 'Alī (1986), *al-Ḥayāh ma'a luġatayni*, Maṭābi' al-Farazdaq al-Tiġāriyyah, Riyāḍ.
- Ḥūrī, Ilyās (1995), *al-Dākīrah al-mafqūdah*, Dār al-Ādāb, Bayrūt, al-ṭab'ah al-tāniyah.
- Khoury, J. (2006a), *The Employment of Popular Proverbs in Modern Arabic Poetry 1945-1961*, in "Journal of the Oriental and African Studies", 15, pp. 95-129.
- Id. (2006b), *Polysystems: A Theoretical Inquiry into Some General Concepts*, in "Journal of Arabic Literature", 37, 1, pp. 109-144.
- Kristeva, J. (1980), *Desire in Language*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Lübānī, Ḥusayn 'Alī (1999), *Mu'ğam al-amṭāl al-filasṭīniyyah*, Maktabat Lubnān Nāšīrūn, Bayrūt.

Milḥam, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad (2000), *al-Uğniyah al-ša'biyyah fī šamāl Filasṭīn qabla 1948*, Maktabat al-Kattānī, 'Ammān.

Moreh, S. (1976), *Modern Arabic Poetry 1800-1970*, Brill, Leiden.

Murtāḍ, 'Abd al-Malik (1994), *Ši'riyyat al-qašīdah, qašīdat al-qirā'ah*, Dār al-Muntaḥab al-'Arabī, Bayrūt.

Nāyif, Mayy (2002), *al-Ḥaḫī'ah wa 'l-takfīr wa 'l-ḫalāš*, Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-Filasṭīniyyīn, Ġazzah.

al-Šabbāğ, Ramaḍān (1998), *Fī naqd al-ši'r al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*, Dār al-Wafā', al-Qāhirah.

Sabīlā, Muḥammad; al-'Alī, 'Abd al-Salām Bin'abd (1998). *al-Luğah*. Dār Tūbqāl, al-Dār al-Bayḍā', al-ṭab'ah al-tāniyah.

al-Šamādī, Imtinān (2001), *Ši'r Sa'dī Yūsuf*, al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah li 'l-Dirāsāt wa 'l-Našr, Bayrūt.

Semah, D. (1995), *Modern Arabic Zajal and the Quest for Freedom*, in "Journal of Arabic Literature", 26, 1-2 (March-June), pp. 80-92.

Šimāḫ, Dāfīd (1995), *Karmiliyyāt*, Wizārat al-Ma'ārif wa 'l-Ṭaqāfah, Dā'irat al-Ṭaqāfah al-'Arabiyyah, al-Nāšīrah.

Snir, R. (1998), *Synchronic and Dynamics in Modern Arabic Literature*, in S. Ballas; R. Snir (eds.), *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*, cit., pp. 87-121.

al-Yūsuf, Ismā'īl (2002), *al-Ġāmi' fī 'l-amṭāl al-'āmmiyyah al-filasṭīniyyah*, al-Ahliyyah, 'Ammān.