Child Apologue: Mahmoud Darwish & the Palestinian Childhood

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ABSTRACT: *This research explores Darwish's thematic topography to understand how he inscribes the experiences of children throughout his poetic career. Basing this exploration on a corpus of 15 selections of his poetry (2000 pages long), this study traces all the verses about children in Darwish's works. Data collection led to searching for the key words in the context of the relevant verses, followed by thematic mapping of the ideas and literary interpretations. In delimiting itself to children in Darwish's poetry, this paper takes a different route from the previous research which consider Darwish "a propagandist for his country's cause, a guerrilla fighting with pen and ink, rather than a serious poet whose prime subject-matter happens to be the tragedy of his country" (Johnson-Davies viii-ix). But the theoretical stance of this paper is that "childhood is constructed by social forces, political interests, cultural phenomena, and macro-societal and political changes" (Diana 4-5), "it participates in the processes of generating meaning and institutional practices" (Nashef 160). The findings of the research establish that children were a lifelong concern with Darwish who highlighted the implications of armed conflict for the Palestinian children. It shows his increasing pessimism regarding the possibilities of a national structure of the Palestinian nation if Palestinian children are deprived of peaceful life. The findings have relevance to the present afflictions committed against Palestinian children in the Israel- Gaza war and their effects on the budding generation of Palestinians.*

Keywords: Palestinian children, Mahmoud Darwish, children in war, Palestinian autobiography

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Introduction

Darwish had a personal experience of Israeli aggression. Everyone he knew had lost someone to the war waged against them by a heavily armed nation. His answer to the offensive was "We shall bombard them with corpulent letters" (Darwish xii). Children mostly fared in his poems as sons of fathers who had died or were imprisoned, but he wrote about their innocence, dreams, and desires, and painted nostalgic portraits of a paradise that was remotely possible. Darwish's poetry refers to Palestinian children's trauma and fear, loss of relatives and consequent grief, with consequent loss of innocence. Darwish being a Muslim Palestinian poet experiencing violent conflict, one would expect his poetry to be both political and religious, with a sharp nationalist and patriotic slant. Also expected is a language, rich in invigorative and instigative metaphors, capable of expressing discourses of victimhood, suffering, traumas, nostalgic yearning for places and people lost, and acceptance of armed opposition as an inevitable response to atrocities, expressed with hatred for the enemy continuing through generations. Paradoxically, such an assumption is not supported by an exploration of Darwish's poetry.

This research chose to study Darwish's poetic handling of Palestine's war children in the widest possible assortment of Darwish's verses. It has attempted to knit a theory or at least a paradigm for the treatment of children's themes in Darwish's poetry. In this way, it has opened new ground for the exploration of other themes like family, father, mother, men, romantic love, and especially Darwish's aesthetics and poetics, all hitherto neglected in favour of his political ideology. The research explored how Darwish saw his poetic enterprise as what Nashef terms "an investment in meaning-generating processes as part of the Palestinian national resurgence" or reconstructing the idea of the child "as a nexus of meaning re-generation (Nashef 160).

Review of Literature

Justifiably, Munir Akash invites us to "Imagine the extent of grief in the poetry of Whitman, Yeats; Pound or Ginsberg if their childhoods had been as bleak, nightmare-ridden, and as much a matter of a lost realm-lost forever-as Darwish's childhood. (Akash 29). Children's reallocation within the family's patriarchal structure to new positions and roles, makes

children become “semi-adults” faster than they would have on the normative path of growing up (Nashef 165). Darwish's child is defined by exile and being a foreigner in one’s own country (Journal of an Ordinary Grief, 94), the inability to define oneself with reference to either a home or a homeland. In “A Naive Song on the Red Cross”, Darwish expressed the sorrow of a motherless child imploring his father to reclaim him from the “embrace” of the Red Cross (Music 23-24).

Darwish’s experiences and expressions of the effects of war on children are easy to contextualize with global studies of children as victims of war, especially in the context of literary and sociological studies of the two World Wars. The narration of their sufferings is used as a strategy to provoke pathos, and “is intended to elicit a variety of cognitive and affective responses” (Brown 117). Ancient writers depicted the grief and sufferings of children as a common narrative strategy (Brown 117). The Biblical book of Lamentations shows how children suffered captivity, hunger and thirst (2.11–12, 4.4; 2.19; 4.4). They were abandoned by their own mothers or even eaten (2.20; 4.10). The traumatic experiences of Israeli children have often been the focus of social and literary explorations. Particularly, Israeli poet Dahlia Ravikovitch’s poetry has been explored with special focus on “orphanhood, estrangement and alienation, madness, and national identity” (Szobel 2013). Studies show that “Children who are exposed either directly or indirectly to armed conflict suffer harm that persists across their life course and beyond, to subsequent generations born after the conflict has ended” (Kadir & Goldhagen 2). Such conflicts cause intense socio-psychological trauma (Catani 105; Rochelle, et al 488-492). World War II adversely affected European families making their reconstruction quite formidable (Zahra 89, 105, 116). More than violence, death and hunger, it was separation from their mothers that caused real trauma in children (Zahra 98). In Witnesses of war: children's lives under the Nazis Stargardt studied that children who witnessed the war suffered long-life traumas (9, 371) so that even their games reflected their traumas (Stargardt 174-175). Many studies have focused on the children of particular countries. Atwood & Donnelly have found evidence that children exposed to violent events become hypervigilant and their moral values change (16). Kennedy’s study focuses on British children’s experience of WWI (51, 56, 61).

Focus of the Study

This research chooses to study poetic handling of Palestine's war children in an adequately large assortment of Darwish's verses. The study aims to move from a subjective experience to a shared experience of childhood in milieu of death and destruction.

Research Methodology

Keeping in view the focus of this study, textual interpretation was used as an approach to research. The phenomenological paradigm justifies this design on the grounds that the poet Darwish is an insider. He as a child, experienced the phenomenon of pain and fear in a war torn nation and his reflexivity cannot be captured better than from his poetic cartography of a traumatized mind. Following the phenomenological philosophy, "subjective consciousness" is used a source of direct knowledge of Darwish's lived experiences as a child (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 20-21). Fifteen purposefully selected excerpts (totaling 2000 pages) served as samples for interpretive analysis to address the focus of this study.

Analysis and Discussion

Like other children of war, Darwish lost "the language that set[s] children apart from grown-up" and instead "[b]oth his mind and soul were introduced to adult words: "boundaries," "refugees," "occupation," "Red Cross," "Relief Agency," "return," and so on" (Bennani 7). Caught between denial and the trauma of exile, Darwish forgot childhood games climbing a tree, picking flowers, and chasing butterflies, which were replaced with defiance and deep thoughts which led him to poetry (Bennani 7). Darwish never got over it, as he expressed in Mural (2017): "I want to say good morning there to the happy boy I was/Happy child I was not/But distance is a brilliant blacksmith who can forge a moon from worthless scrap" (n.p.).

Darwish had a personal experience of war. On his sixth birthday, his village was attacked, and his father was killed. Darwish escaped with traumatic memories of the attack.

The bullets fired that evening of the summer of 1948 in the skies of a peaceful village, Birwa, did not discriminate against anyone. I found myself (I had turned six on that day) chased by them into the black olive groves and up the rough mountains, sometimes crawling on my belly.

After a long night of blood, terror, and thirst, I found myself in a country called Lebanon. (Al-Naqqash 108, qtd. in Bennani 4)

On his return two years later, he found his home and village burned. He recalled his trauma in these words: "How could entire villages be destroyed? And why? And how are they built again? (al-Yaghi 15-17; qtd. in Bennani 4). More traumatic was the discovery that the Palestine he had expected to find had ceased to exist: The home was not a home: "... In the morning I came face to face with a steel wall of lost hope. I was finally inside promised Palestine. But where was it? … I did not return to my home and village" (qtd. in Bennani 4). Years later, his idea of tragedy mixed with the trials of Christ were expressed in a highly intertextual passage:

My lord . . . my lord! why have you forsaken me

while I'm still a child . . . and you haven't tested me yet? (Siege 141)

The trauma of return from exile was transmuted into a theory of tragedy in which the personal and the collective became one. In the introduction to Birds, the first collection of his poetry, Darwish wrote, "

My childhood signalled the beginning of my own private tragedy which was born along with the beginning of the tragedy of an entire nation. That childhood was thrown into the fire of war, in the tent, in exile, all at once and without any extractable reason. All of a sudden, it found itself being treated as an adult, an adult who had the strength to endure. (Bennani. 6-7)

Darwish expressed this loss of childhood and mental imprisonment in The Butterfly's Burden (1998) as being old without having aged:

"I don't remember that I was once young."

I was born to two enemy brothers:

my prison and my ailment.

And where did you find childhood then, I asked?

In my sentimental interior. I am the child

and the elderly. My child teaches my elderly metaphor.

And my elderly teaches my child contemplation in my exterior. (Butterfly's Burden 309)

In the phrase "two enemy brothers", Darwish coalesces the historical feud between Jews and Muslims as starting from the struggle for the right of the first0born between Isaac and Ishamel in which Ishmael was driven away with his mother Hagar (Genesis, chapters 16 & 21).

Darwish's childhood was embittered by the idea of being a refugee in his own homeland: "Being a refugee at home, however, cannot be justified ... It is unfathomable for the mind of a child or a young boy" (Bennani 8). He represented the state of mind of millions of Palestinian children when he wrote: "I felt sad and oppressed even in my sweetest dreams ... My reactions to the bitter reality showed all over my face like secret signs or intimations of doom. I felt as if I were borrowed from an ancient book which I could not recall" (Bennani 8). Darwish expresses vehemently against child protection organisations which surrogated displaced children so that "the children got farther and farther from mother's milk after they had tasted the milk of UNRWA … the orphan lived in the skin of the orphan, and one refugee camp went into another. (Memory, 88-89).

Darwish's unnamed children capture the grief of all displaced children. "A Plain Song about the Red Cross" (Music, 23-24) captures the innocent impressions of a child unable tom feel safe in the arms of the Red Cross. The innocent address to the father metaphorically calls up the God the father and alluding to Eliot's red rock asks inoffensively "Father, do flowers grow in the shade of the cross?" The father next becomes the Palestinian man whom the child says "I ask a million questions/And see in your eyes the silence of stone". The child's questions combine eschatology with existentially important queries like "why, Father mine, do you dream of the sun at sunset" (Music 23). Darwish captured a child's recognition of his father's pain when he wrote: "My grandfather died with his gaze fixed on a land imprisoned behind a fence" (Memory 88).

The growth of child's development of anger is rooted in the experience of loss, "They denied me the swings of daytime, /They kneaded my bread with mud, my eyelashes with dust". The child victim of violence is unable to understand the loss of innocence to aggression: "Oh who has exploded me at one instant/Into a stream of fire?". The transition from innocence to aggression does not come naturally to the victim who is perplexed by the contradiction: "Oh, who has robbed me of the dove's nature/Under the Red Cross flags?".

It was natural that freedom and defiance should naturally cohere (Bennani 9). It is true that contemplation on the personal and the collective, i.e. the tragic and the painful, came together to give Darwish a philosophy in which anger and sorrow triggered defiance. But the poet in Darwish transmuted both into an angst and a pathos for humanity. His poetry foregrounds the pain and sadness of undefined children without nationality thereby universalizing their pain rather than making them autobiographical figures or them to Palestinian nationality. His refugee child is all refugee children: "Being a refugee at home … cannot be justified ... It is unfathomable for the mind of a child or a young boy. ... I felt sad and oppressed even in my sweetest dreams ... My reactions to the bitter reality showed all over my face like secret signs or intimations of doom. I felt as if I were borrowing from an ancient book which I could not read" (qtd. in Bennani p. 8). This was no poetic romanticism or melodrama; no reveries or dream world influenced Darwish's rhetoric. As he commented on the 1967 war: "I was not living in the clouds then and had no need of such a pernicious proof to bring me back to reality" (al-Naqqash 105-106, qtd. in Bennani 15).

Darwish's child is a universal exile who also represents the Diasporic Jews of Babylon. In Psalms, Darwish's intersexual allusions to Babylonian captivity sing glad tidings of the return to Jerusalem, thus knitting together the twin pains of exile separated by race and time. Darwish's "Let's sing Jerusalem:/Children of Babylon, /offspring of chains/you will return to Jerusalem soon/You will grow soon (Psalms 67) becomes the psalm of Palestinian exiles. In Ruba'iyat 4, intertextuality vaults over time and finds the Palestinian child in the Biblical Joseph: "Wasn't I that child playing/near the lip of the well, /still playing?" (Adam of Two Edens 64). Jospeh's experience of his brothers brings a painful wisdom to the Palestinian children "reached at the edge of the well" (The Stranger's Bed 83). It also recalls Ishmael, another Biblical brother driven from home: 'Did you know that your mother, Sarah, drove my mother, Hagar, into the desert? /-Am I to blame then? Is it for that you don't love me? (Memory: 125). The quarrel for birthright extends generations in the Old Testament. Jospeh's exile forced by his brothers symbolizes Palestinian exile while the Israelis are established as their brothers driving them away. Intertextuality helps Darwish establish the similarity of exilic experience which builds his theory of history in which all invaders and all conquered or exiled. On an empathetic scale, this is Darwish's way of pleading that all pains and losses are the same (See "Nero" in A River Dies 9, and "Narcissus" in Adam of Two Edens 184).

Darwish's metaphors for childhood coalesce in recurring versification of the deer, doe, and fawn, who replace the Biblical dove and were adopted from the Native American Dear People with whom he identified the Palestinians (Akash 40). The harsh colonization of Native Americans voices the Palestinian claim to the land before the coming of the colonizing strangers: "We were here first, /no ceiling to separate our blue doors from the sky,/no horses to graze where our deer used to graze,/no strangers bursting in on the night of our wives" (Adam of Two Edens 138, 139). The aggression is answered with defiance: "We'll defend our leaping deer, /the clay of our jars, the feathers/in the wings of our last songs" (Adam of Two Edens 142). The Palestinian experience of wisdom gained of sorrow is expressed in the Persian poetic form of the Ruba'i (derived from the Arabic word for four): "I've seen all I want to see of peace:/a deer, a pasture and a stream./I close my eyes:/the deer is asleep in my arms --/his hunter is asleep in a faraway place/near his children" (Adam of Two Edens 65). But then the deer's innocence is lost when aggression replaces peace: "But do you know that a deer/will never approach grass that's been/stained with our blood? (Adam of Two Edens 136). Darwish's making of a poetic world for children is harshly conscious that the slaughter of the innocent results in loss of all innocence. "The Tragedy of Narcissus, The Comedy of Silver" makes all experiences of invasions as one experience (ibid 184).

Darwish presented the fawn as an orphaned child in "A Man and a Fawn Are in the Garden" (Butterfly's Burden 229), a poem dedicated to Sulieman el-Najjab, the Palestinian communist politician known as Abu Firas. Here, the poet's friend addresses the fawn as a son, on whose grave he utters: "Get up, my son, /and let your father sleep in your bed. /Right here I'll find serenity". Significantly, the gazelle's grave is white, just like the white lilies in "The Soldier Dreams" (Music 19).

In The Music of Human Flesh (1980), perhaps, we get our first reference to children in "A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies" (Music 19) where Darwish narrated his meeting with an Israeli soldier who desired "to live sunrises/Not sunsets" (Music 22) and wanted "a smiling child meeting the day with laughter/Not a piece of the war machine". The contrast with Darwish's own inability to smile (Bennani 8) is augured. For this soldier, who dreamed of "white lilies, /Of an olive branch" (Music 20), home "Is to drink my mother's coffee, /To return of an evening" (ibid). He was taught to love his homeland in "a fiery article, a lecture" he was taught "to be in love with love of it", so that now "For me love's instrument is a

gun". The reference to his mother inscribes the child in his heart led "To some place at the front" where he learnt to kill for a medal. The editor's footnote (ibid 22) informs us that Darwish here had captured his meeting with an Israeli soldier. Thus, the first mention of a child came from the desire of an Israeli whom Darwish empathetically tragedized, inscribing his humanity in the midst of war.

Darwish contrasted this Israeli soldier's desire with the desire of a Palestinian child "wanting festivities and a kiss" (Music 28) and who, not seeing any fulfilment, is filled with "the anger of the exile at being made to grieve" ("Homeland", Music 28). The child grows up to be a young man "in whose skin/The shackles etch/A likeness of the homeland" ("Birds Die in Galilee", Music 28). Within the compass of The Music of Human Flesh, Darwish traversed the landscape of empathy to sympathy, finally reaching the edges of a purely Palestinian ethos where the possibilities of a harmonious future faded in the din of war imposed on Palestinian children.

In "Nero" (A River Dies 9), Darwish masterfully captured the history of brutalities rooted in the mind of a twisted dictator, mad with power, who watches Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine burn, while "His eyes/wander ecstatically and he walks like someone dancing at a wedding". The question: "What's going on in Nero's mind as he watches?" is an invitation to psychoanalyse someone who dictates that "the children have to learn to behave/themselves and stop shouting when I'm playing my tunes!" Darwish's psychoanalysis of Israeli killers in "The Law of Fear" (A River Dies 38) finds the causes of human atrocious behavior in the inexplicable dread of life force of the enemy. The unrepenting killer tells the onlookers: "Don't blame me. I'm afraid. I killed because I'm afraid, and I'll kill again because I'm afraid". Criticising the world response to the killings, Darwish invites the readers to "turn our attention to comforting the frightened man" leading to the question: "What has the child done wrong?", which is answered with a Nero-like defiance: "He will grow up and frighten the frightened man's son". The genocidal predisposition to violence explains the killing of women as "She will give birth to a memory". Darwish's intertextuality here finds the roots of Israeli philosophy of war in the scriptures which described Joshua killing all human and animals after the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6: 21-25). Here, the act of cutting down the tree is justified because "green bird will appear from it". The poem captures Neroesque philosophy in the war cry, "Fear, not justice, is the basis of power". Then memory, and karma bring about

a closure “The specter of the dead man appeared to them from a cloudless sky and when they opened fire on him they did not see a single drop of blood, and they were afraid” (A River Dies 38).

This exploration of history of genocidal violence is essential to Darwish’s philosophy of children. He links it with the holocaust to establish that the fear of the powerful causes violence, and to argue that Israelis are fighting a Hitleresque war. In A State of Siege (2002), the victim argues with the killer by the memory of the holocaust:

(To a killer:) If you'd contemplated the victim's face

and thought, you would have remembered your mother in the gas

chamber, you would have liberated yourself from the rifle 's wisdom

and changed your mind: this isn't how identity is reclaimed! (Siege 48)

Despite the deaths of Palestinian children, Darwish’s vision of possibilities for Palestinian and Israeli children remained optimistic. Out of the fire and blood of Israeli killers’ genocide, he saw their children growing up together. His dialogues to Israeli killers in Siege, imagine how possibilities for the future could change if Israeli soldiers stopped killing Palestinian children.

(To another killer:) Had you left the fetus

for thirty days, the possibilities would have changed:

the occupation might end and that suckling

would not remember the time of siege,

and he 'd grow up a healthy child, become a young man

and study in the same institution with one of your daughters

the ancient history of Asia

and they might fall together in passion's net

and beget a girl (and she'd be Jewish by birth)

so what have you done then? (Siege 131-33)

The possibilities for this future are immensely optimistic and Darwish is contended that girls born of such marriages would be Jewish. But as the killings of Palestinian youth go on, the Israelis destroy the future possibilities for their own daughters.

Now your daughter has become a widow

and your granddaughter an orphan?

What have you done to your fugitive family

And how did you strike three doves with one shot? (Siege 131-33)

Darwish's dream for the future in his last expressions were filled with desires for a bright future for children.

There is a region in my heart, uninhabited, which welcomes children

looking for an unoccupied area to pitch their summer camp. (A River 152)

He saw Palestinian young men marrying Jewish girls and bearing Jewish children.

Our children have married exiled princesses

who changes their names. (Almond Blossoms, n.p.)

In immaculately simple prose, Darwish poeticized how shy and simple, Palestinian boys grow up to become handsome youth only to be tortured by Israeli police and mangled by Israeli bombardment. In his memory of his childhood friend, Samir, who was "as handsome as the biblical Joseph, and shy without being pious" and who had "[c]lear blue eyes from the sea at Acre … [c]urly hair, the color of chestnuts, and a broad forehead commanding a view above us", Darwish remembered "how the police had made [Samir's father] listen through the wall to Samir's moans under continuous torture. A pack of wolves preying on a captive gazelle. He was destroyed as he listened to the sounds of slow death emerging from the body of his pampered son, elegant and handsome, raised in comfort and plenty" (Memory 28-29). Darwish inscribed hos Samir's mother conceptualized the life and sacrifice of Palestinian youth: "… his mother … was able to calm her nerves and preserve her psychological balance

through motherly pride, awakened by the perception that her son was now a man who had challenged a state that had defeated other states. She thus turned her sadness into pride" (Memory 29).

Samir escaped the torture but was caught in an air raid: "The jets had mangled his legs and one of his arms, had ripped open his belly and gouged out his eyes as he was evacuating the wounded from the square of the Sports city. What was left of him? I mean, what was left of the looks that had lit fires under the skirts of girls?" (Memory 28). Darwish explained the reason this inhuman treatment in "The Palestinian child is an enemy" (Memory 135).

Darwish's children are parts of the national and familial structure. Everything is constructed with these units. He deconstructs how a girl victim of air raid is just one unit in a larger construction.

On the seashore is a girl, and the girl has a family

and the family has a house. And the house has two windows and a door

(The Girl/The Scream, A River 3)

When the aircraft bombed the house, her scream becomes an endless silent echo when neglected by the media:

so, she becomes the endless scream in the breaking news

which was no longer breaking news

when

The aircraft returned to bomb a house with two windows and a door.

Darwish's child is only rarely a girl, but he makes her a representative of the future:

The woman I will see tomorrow in the same setting, I also know.

She is my daughter whom I left in the middle of the poems so that she

could learn to walk, then fly, beyond this setting, and perhaps earn the

admiration of the viewers and disappoint the snipers. For a clever friend

said to me: 'It's time for us to move on, if we can, from a subject that

makes people pity us to one that makes them envy us.' (A River 144)

Yet his vision of blood and suffering mixed with a wish to end the danse macabre continued till the end of his life:

Blood

and blood

and blood.

This land is too small for the blood of its children (Almond Blossoms)

Darwish was conscious of the contradiction between his poetic aspirations and his national commitments.

In “Counterpoint” (Almond Blossoms), a poem dedicated to Edward Said, Darwish asked:

Would I be able to speak

of peace and war among victims,

and victims of victims?

Without contradiction? (n.p.)

His growing grim consciousness is that “From massacre to slaughter have my people been led, and still they bring forth offspring in debrisfilled stopping places, flash victory signs, and prepare wedding feasts” (Memory 90) and that “there is still enough fuel and arms in Israeli warehouses to finish off fifty thousand Lebanese and Palestinian children. There is still enough conventional military hardware in American warehouses to annihilate all cities. (Memory 108).

Even with “Anti-forgetfulness wars” going on with “anti-oblivion stones”, “people bring children into the world to carry their name, or to bear for them the weight of the name and its glory” (Memory 15). With time, Darwish’s words became increasingly filled with despair and a desire to have no children: “How beautiful it is to die on the shore of the river of tart honey, without scandal, without nakedness, and without

children!" (Memory 130). Darwish concluded that "It's good I'm alone, alone, alone" (Memory 25-26).

Darwish's final poems are deeply sorrowful about childhood: "we left our childhood for the butterfly" (Leave the Horse 54) – Darwish's most favourite collection (ibid viii). With consciousness of death, he mused on his memories of his grandfather. In "How Many Times Shall Things Be Over?", Darwish captured the anguish of a father and son in exile. The father knows that "… my way to God starts/From a star in the South…" (14). Their dialogue takes place between sleep and wake, waking them up to what they had left back at home. This idea continues in "To My End and to its End…", where a father has taken his tired child on his shoulders while they are going home. He visualizes their family house with "… bars of sunlight on the stone steps/Sunflowers gazing into the beyond/Tame bees preparing breakfast for grandfather", he also envisions "…behind the hedge, a tomorrow, leafing through our pages…" and his eyes become moist making the child ask:

– Father, are you tired?

I see sweat in your eyes.

– My son, I am tired… Will you carry me?

– Just as you carried me, Father,

So shall I carry this longing

For

My beginnings and its beginnings,

And I shall walk this road to

My end… and its end! (16-17)

Mural enshrines Darwish's deep thoughts about death and life with direct addresses to death in a most Donne-like style. It was written at a time when "A hand's reach away I see heaven/a dove's white wing transporting me to another childhood". In the final consciousness that "I wasn't the child who happily said: yesterday was better", nihilism and stoicism mix with the hope for children in Mural:

Beware of tomorrow and live today in a woman who loves you

live for your body not your illusion

And wait

A child will carry your soul in your place

Conclusion

The interpretive analysis of Darwish's poetry suggests a mix of hope and hopelessness. The analysis provides lived experiences as evidence of Darwish's increasing consciousness that subjecting innocent Palestinian children to armed aggression was depriving them of healthy participation in nation building. From his first inscription of an Israeli soldier desiring a smiling child, Darwish saw the failure of his vision of joint future-building for peaceful Jewish and Palestinian children. Darwish, and his earnest reader, both seem to be convinced that Israeli arsenal fed by American war factories had an unending mission to inhibit Palestinian nation-making. He rightly concludes that to "speak/of peace and war among victims/and victims of victims" was a contradiction in itself (Almond 92).

The findings of the study have an international implication for the complex Palestinian-Israel conflict. The issue has many dimensions including religious, political, historical, and above all, emotional and psychological. The study attempts to invite attention of all the international and local players of this human tragedy to peep into the not so far noticed psychological and emotional scars of the Palestinians, especially on the weaker souls of the society including children, women, and the old. The issue, as the analysis of Darwish's poetry reflects is far more of human suffering and less of a need for Palestinian state. What this study could not analyze but needs to be researched is to deconstruct the narratives of human rights, freedom, and peace in the context of meta-narratives arising from the war in Palestine

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