

EXPLORING THE CONCEPTS OF “HOMELAND”, “EXILE” AND “RETURN” IN
THE PALESTINIAN POETRY THROUGH THE WORK OF MAHMOUD DARWISH

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents

And,

To my country

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*“I see what I want of Love... I see horses making the meadow dance,
fifty guitars sighing, and a swarm of bees suckling the wild berries, and
I close my eyes until I see our shadow behind this dispossessed place...*

*I see what I want of people: their desire to long for anything, their
lateness in getting to work and their hurry to return to their folk... and
their need to say: Good Morning...”*

Mahmoud Darwish, *If I were another: Poems* (Darwish 2011)

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE CONCEPTS OF “HOMELAND”, “EXILE” AND “RETURN” IN THE PALESTINIAN POETRY THROUGH THE WORK OF MAHMOUD DARWISH

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George Mason University and University of Malta, 2016

Thesis Director: Prof. Richard Rubenstein

This thesis studies the Palestinian discourse on exile and return through the exploration of Palestinian poetry. Special attention will be given to the work of Mahmoud Darwish, a leading figure of Palestinian poetry. To this end, different pieces of literature concerning theories on social identity and collective memory mechanisms were chosen and reviewed. The analysis was divided into four different sections. Each section corresponds to a theme present and typical of Palestinian poetry. The systematic exploration of these themes in Palestinian poetry informs us on the Palestinian narrative about exile and the return. The themes studied are bloodlines, love, nature and mythology. Palestinian poets have used poetry as a strong communicative tool to narrate their experiences and feelings, whether personal or political. This was a good enough reason for me to choose the study of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry works as study examples.

INTRODUCTION

“Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile’s life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever” (Said 2000)

This study aims to explore the question of *the right of return* for the Palestinian refugees. This research will attempt to look at this issue through a specific prism: poetry. In this study, we will explore the existing relationship between Palestinian poetry and the deep-rooted and highly emotional collective struggle of return. As the title of our research suggests, particular attention will be devoted to the work of Mahmoud Darwish. The reason for choosing this particular poet will be explained in detail in a subsequent section of this thesis.

Context and significance of the study

Contextualization

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for decades and is rightfully described in modern international language as perhaps the contemporary world’s most intractable conflict. Although 70 years have passed, the conflict still involves strong emotions between both belligerents. Among the various issues one may discuss when

dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the question of the Palestinian Right of Return is of particular importance. This issue has constituted a major hurdle in an attempt to sustainably and peacefully resolve this longstanding conflict (Pappe 1994). Some observers go as far as to claim that the Palestinian refugees' right of return represents the bare bedrock upon which other layers of the conflict are mounted (Shipler, as cited in Friedman 2005: 7). If for Israeli citizens the question of return is a minor aspect of the broader refugee issue, for Palestinians it actually represents a priority and is highly ranked in their political agenda. More than a simple political demand, exile and the right of return have become part of the Palestinian identity or, as argued by Gohar (2011: 231), a "*permanent condition in which they have attempted to express the wounds of a lost homeland and of a people transformed into a nation of refugees*".

The impact of the right of return issue on the negotiation process as well as its role in the collapse of the Camp David talks, amidst the eruption of the second Intifada in 2000 and its central role in the Palestinian collective discourse, suggest that this question is still pertinent. It has become evident that the 1967 frame of reference, used until now, leaves many unaddressed grievances and that subsequently, the events of 1948 and their immediate consequences have to be included in the talks (Friedman 2005). For Gren (2002), the future of the Palestinian refugees is among the most difficult controversies to resolve in peace negotiations. According to her, the importance of the right of return for Palestinian people can be explained partly by the fact that the Palestinian leadership used it as a vector of cohesion and has maintained the indisputable right of return of the

refugees in its narrative, while, in practice, demands have been modified in the peace process, creating what Isotalo (2006: 9) defines as a “*friction between popular understanding of return and political initiatives and policy-scenarios in which return has been decoupled from the elements of identity, history, recognition and different notions of rights in order to promote a notion of return as practice*”.

Some scholars develop an alternative explanation for the prominence of the right of return in Palestinian discourse. Indeed, Isotalo (2006: 8) argues that the “*reasons for the centrality of return in numerous Palestinians’ cognitive spaces and their respective social realities are continuously reproduced through their vulnerable status in host countries – and through the perpetuation of the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*”.

Finally, some scholars question the actual importance of the return for Palestinians. Bisharat (1997) argues that the right of return has become less important ever since the first intifada and creating a collective political identity has become a more significant priority. He suggested that this shift is a bottom up dynamic that originated from an initiative of a young intifada generation in the early 1990s. There is a generational shift from prioritizing Palestine as a geographical entity to an actual nation, hence the development of a strong national identity (Bisharat, as cited in Isotalo 2006: 10).

Discussing collective memories

The War of 1948 and the subsequent events have led to two different collective narratives for Palestinians and Israelis. Just like Bar-Tal and Salomon (2006: 3), we conceive collective narratives as “*social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community’s collective experiences, embodied in its belief system and represent the collective’s symbolically constructed shared identity*”. Clearly, the narrative of collective memory in a situation of intractable conflict involves particular aspects such as the development of an over-‘positivized’ image of one’s group in contrast with the other. According to LeVine and Campbell (1972), groups implicated in intractable conflicts tend to engage in ethnocentrism, characterized by intense self-justification and self-glorification. In this narrative of the past, the memory is articulated around a vision of the present: an ethos. Bar-Tal defines an ethos as “*the configuration of central societal shared beliefs that provide particular dominant orientation to a society*” (Bar-Tal, as cited in Bar-Tal et Salomon 2006: 9).

For Palestinians, the right of return has been a major preoccupation since 1948 and what they call *Al-Nakba*¹. According to the Palestinian narrative, in the aftermath of the 1948 War, approximately 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were either expelled from their homes or were forced to flee the country, hence their adopted status of “refugees”. About

¹ “*Nakba, meaning catastrophe, is the term used by Palestinians to describe their collective experience – epitomized by their personal and collective dispossession and subsequent refugee-ness – which resulted from the creation of the state of Israel and specifically from the 1948 war and its aftermath*” (Friedman 2005: 12)

70 percent of Palestine's Arab population was dispossessed of properties on what has, since then, become the land of Israel (Bickerton and Klausner, as cited in Uebel 2014: 5). Some scholars, such as Pappé (2000: 138-139), argue that as part of a plan to make the return of these refugees impossible, the Israeli leadership deliberately ordered the destruction of Arab villages and replaced them with new cities allocated to Jewish migrants. Palestinian refugees dispersed themselves throughout several surrounding Arab countries (Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt). Despite this mass exodus, the injury felt by the Palestinian people was collective, and a return to their homeland became one of their main concerns for Palestinians all around the world (Uebel 2014: 6). What is central to this research is the idea that the Nakba remained an unprocessed traumatic and painful memory for the Palestinians (Keynan 2014).

For Israelis, the collective memory narrative of 1948 is quite different. According to Hofman (1970), Jews in Israel viewed themselves as new people, reborn in a new land: Israel. In addition, Rubenstein (1971: 111) argues that "*as individuals and as a society, Israelis are characterized by a deeply rooted suspicious attitude toward others*". According to Hareven (as cited in Bar-Tal et Salomon 2006: 12), these fears have been amplified by the attempts of Arabs to prevent Jews from settling in Palestine. Similarly, the war of 1948 was perceived by Israelis as an evidence of their victimization (Bar-Tal et Salomon 2006). In this context, what happened in 1948 is considered by Israelis as a 'war of independence' during which Jewish people were attacked by Arab states who attempted to wipe out their new state. When it comes to the question of the Palestinian

exile, the mainstream Israeli narrative states that “*the Palestinians voluntarily ‘fled’ their villages in accordance with orders given by the Arab armies, ignoring the Jewish call to them to stay put*” (Mori 2009: 89). The prevalent narrative is to say that no systematic policy of expulsion was adopted by the Israelis and that therefore, Israel is not responsible for the refugee issue, which is, at the end of the day, a product of the Arab-initiated war of aggression.

Academic significance of the study

The idea of return is of crucial importance in the Palestinian collective memory. As Shiblak puts it, “*the quest of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes is not only a legal and moral right but has become a major part of Palestinian identity and symbolizes Palestinian historical narratives. It has been an effective instrument of mobilization that became the political priority of various resistance groups*” (Shiblak 2009). Furthermore, the very notion of return in the Palestinian culture is closely linked to various other concepts such as homeland, exile, refugees, and justice. It is therefore an interesting and useful prism through which a large panel of other conflict-related issues can be viewed. Discussing the right of return is much more significant than its direct implications as an isolated topic. Indeed, it allows the conflict to be seen in a different, much broader, sense.

Given the issue's centrality in the Palestinians' collective perception, I am convinced that we, as scholars, should investigate this topic in more detail if we wish to have even the most basic understanding of the Palestinian ideology.

Understanding the subject of the study

As for other protracted conflicts, the opposition between the belligerents is deeply rooted in people's collective perceptions and it encompasses all aspects of social life including cultural and artistic production. Literature lay among the various vehicles of identity building and memory transmitting (Anderson 1991; Yerushalmi et Bloom 1996a; Ross 1997; Volkan 1998) but its impact on social identity dynamics is still underestimated. Originally, the primary aim of the thesis was to discuss the way literature influences Palestinians' perspective on the question of return through examining the core aspects of Palestinian literature on the matter. However, the intellectual category of literature is too broad. Instead of constructing a 'grand' theory on Palestinian literature on the right of return, this thesis shall examine a specific aspect of the Palestinian artistic corpus. Among all types of literature, poetry holds a particular place in Palestinian culture and more generally in the Arab World. We therefore chose to focus our attention on the poetic works on the return issue.

According to Jacqueline Ismael, poetry has always been a principal mode of expression and communication among Arabs (Ismael 1981). Scholar Moussa-Mahmoud went even further and said that "*no literacy form is more indicative of the unity of Arabic*

literature than poetry” (Moussa-Mahmoud 1978). The importance of poetry is even more profound in Palestinian society as “*Palestinians have utilized poetry to analyze [...] their pathos [and they have] revitalized poetry as a practical tool of production-the production of revolutionary consciousness*” (Ismael, as cited in Uebel 2014). Moreover, since poetry occupied a particular place in the Arab cultural tradition, the Palestinian resistance has turned to poetry as a way to assert its Arab identity (Elmessiri 1981). At this point in our discussion of the poetry’s significance in Palestine, and more generally throughout the Arab world, the question of why poetry matters when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict’s issue becomes pertinent. The aim of the present study is to bring more insight to the Palestinian understanding of the concept of right of return by exploring their national poetry. In order to have a sense of how the Palestinian collective identity of this concept evolved, the material analyzed, namely poems written by major Palestinian poets, will range from the late 19th century till contemporary times. Particular attention will be given to the work of Mahmoud Darwish.

General research question

This study aims to answer the following research question:

How are the concepts of “Homeland”, “Exile” and “Return” presented and how have they evolved in the Palestinian poetry during the 20th century?

Keeping in mind that the nature of social identity and its cultural components is in constant evolution, the study will have to take into account the expansion of poetry according to the various experiences suffered from the Palestinians ever since the beginning of the past century. The mechanisms of social identification and evolution will be analyzed in the literature review.

The long history of Palestinian poetry can be divided in six *poetical periods*, each one corresponding to a different poetical style, namely classicism, neo-classicism, romanticism, free poetry, resistance poetry and ‘postmemory’ poetry. This chronological division was borrowed from Hugh Lovatt, from the School of Oriental and African Studies of the London University (Lovatt 2010). Particular attention will be given to the resistance poetry as it is the period that symbolize better the post-Nakba Palestinian narrative.

Layout of the study

The structure of the study will proceed as follows: In the first three chapters, the theoretical insights that provide information throughout this research are presented. It will also be the opportunity for me to discuss the potential contribution of the given research to the field of conflict analysis and resolution in further detail. The discussion will involve concepts such as social identity, collective memory, historical narratives, and more specific discussions on poetry and literature analysis.

Chapter IV describes the research's methodological specificities. After having examined both the theoretical and methodological aspects of the research, chapter V focuses on the actual data analysis.

By the end of this study, a light shall be shed on the impact of poetry on the Palestinian collective identity, namely on what the *Nakba* represents and what the right of return means. In the conclusion we will attempt to recapitulate the essence of Palestinian discourse on the right of return as found in the various analyzed poetical works.

Finally, the dissertation will end with some further questions about the topic and some thoughts and recommendations on what future researches on the topic might need to include.

PREAMBLE TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Before we start exploring the two main concepts of this research, namely social identity and collective memory, we have to define how, and to which end, culture can be used as the prism of analysis in the context of our study. The details of poetry as a specific form of cultural medium will not be addressed yet. Rather, this preamble is a way for us to define how culture can be a framework for the study of political psychology and socio-national identity.

Culture as a framework

Culture lies among the various factors that play a central role in social identity-building processes. It constitutes a transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitude towards life (Geertz 1973). From this perspective, culture can be seen as public, shared meanings; behaviors are understood as culturally constituted phenomena (Spiro, as cited in Ross 1997).

Looking at a conflict through the prism of culture has several advantages. Indeed, the analyst is able to put the conflict in a context which highlights primarily what the parties believe is at stake, and identify both the belligerents' concrete interests and threats

to identity (Ross 1997: 300). As Ross (1997: 301) puts it, “*culture is usefully thought of as worldview which explains why and how individuals and groups behave as they do and includes both cognitive and affective? Beliefs about social reality and assumptions about when, where, and how people in one’s culture and those in other cultures are likely to act in particular ways*”.

Kevin Avruch (1998), in his book ‘Culture and Conflict Resolution’, also reflects on the importance of culture in the outbreak of conflicts, as well as in the process of conflict resolution. According to him, “*how we conceptualize the root causes of conflict will determine to a large degree the sorts of conflict resolution theories and practices we favor, or even think possible. Likewise, how we conceive of conflict’s causes will determine the importance of culture in our theories and practices of conflict resolution*” (1998: 24).

Avruch (2004) argues that culture determines what are the objects of dispute by postulating their value and relative (or absolute) scarcity. Moreover, he argues that culture stipulates rules on how contests should be pursued and ended. Furthermore, he suggests that “*to see culture as context is to understand that even before parties meet and converse for the first time, their most fundamental comprehension of their respective positions, interests, and values have been set and circumscribed by the very language with which they bring them to expression*” (2004: 3).

Given our discussion takes place in a political context, the anthropological notion of culture which namely states that widely shared understandings occur among people with a common identity which distinguishes them from others (Ross 1997: 302). What is crucial here is the idea that people share a common identity, characterized by the subjective we-feelings of cultural groups. Culture basically links individual and collective identities. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that culture is only one source of social identity-building.

Cultural dimension as a determinant link between the individual and the social identity

As suggested by Korostelina, the exploration of cultural dimensions can provide a key to the understanding of interrelations between social and individual identity (Korostelina 2007). People evolve in a complex system of interrelations within their social environment (idem). Culture is expressed through specific behavior, customs and rituals which mark the daily life of its members and reveal how people view the past, present and future (Ross 1997: 302). Another important element for our research on Palestinians' conception of the right of return in their national poetry is Ross' argument that "*cultural metaphors have both cognitive meaning which describes experience and high affective salience which emphasizes the unique intragroup bonds [...] which sets one group's experience apart from others*" (Ross 1997: 302). The set of shared values, norms and behaviors that defines a group and distinguishes it from other social groups is called a cultural syndrome (Triandis and Suh 2002). The cultural reservoir is shared and

transmitted between members. However, it should be noted that cultural learning is not necessarily very conscious at all; daily transmitted experiences take place in a specific social framework of culturally sanctioned beliefs and behaviors (Ross 1997: 314). Nevertheless, an important question one should ask is what do people of a given culture share with each other? If throughout these sections we made it clear that members of a group share the same worldview, this does not mean that there are no differences among them in terms of lifestyle, values and practices. According to Ross (1997), the fact that people share a common identity is the most important.

In the next section, we will explore the concept of social identity and the dynamics that characterize people's development of collective identities.

CHAPTER ONE – LITERATURE REVIEW I: THEORIES ON GROUP DYNAMICS

1. Introduction

As the subject of this study concerns shared conceptions of collective identity and collective memory as reflected in Palestinian poetry, it is essential to explore the concept of social identity and related group dynamics, such as community, social salience, social categorization, social boundaries, collective axiology and national identity. In the following chapter, these themes are presented and elaborated on. While proceeding with the exploration of these concepts, connections are regularly made, so as to underline their relevance to the present study. Then, in order to make sense of intra and inter groups dynamics, one should first explore the concept of *Social Identity*. Our main objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which groups get to make sense of their socio-political environment, and how they position themselves in it. After delving deeper into the actual meaning of social identity, we will continue to explore the transmission of collective memory and traumas. The underlying purpose of this literature review is to lay the preliminary foundations for the formation of our research question.

2. Defining Groups

Before we explore the concept of social identity, we should attempt to clearly define the notion of group. Stets and Burke see a group in very broad terms, defining it as “*a set of individuals, who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category*” (Stets and Burke 2000: 225). Tajfel (1978: 28-29) suggests that the concept of *group* can be divided into three components:

- i. *The Cognitive Component*: Members know that they belong to the group; they have a common sense of belonging.
- ii. *The Evaluative Component*: The very notion of the group and/or of one’s membership of the group may have a positive or negative value connotation.
- iii. *The Emotional Component*: The cognitive and evaluative aspects of the group, as well as one’s membership of the group may be accompanied by emotions directed towards one’s own group and/or towards others which stand in a certain relationship to it.

Tajfel and Turner argue that “*individuals perceive themselves as members of a group and identify themselves with it*” (Tajfel and Turner, as cited in Korostelina 2007: 23-24). Sumner identified ‘*ingroup*’ and ‘*we-group*’, that are composed of ourselves, wherein relations are ordered and peaceful, in contrast to the ‘*outgroup*’ or the ‘*other-group*’, which consists of everyone else (those who are not in the ‘*we-group*’), and with whom relations are frequently hostile. As a result, there is hostility towards the out-group

and a focus on the ‘we-group’ (Sumner, as cited in Camilleri 2014). Linking the main concept of this chapter, namely *Social Identity*, with the group theory, Korostelina argues that what is referred to as Social Identity is to be understood as being “*developed through the affiliation of individuals to different groups, along with a determination of their position in society*” (K. V. Korostelina 2007). Individuals associate with groups because it is a source of pride and self-esteem, and more importantly, it provides individuals with a sense of belonging to the world by adopting a social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979). In order to enhance the status of the group to which we belong (and by doing so increase our self-image), we make a distinction between ‘*them*’ and ‘*us*’. This process is known as *social categorization* (Tajfel and al. 1971). A central aspect of the social identity theory is that in order to enhance their self-image, members of a group (us) will discriminate the outgroup (them). Members of the group will tend to exaggerate (McLeod 2008):

- i. The difference between groups
- ii. The similarities of things in the same group

This process is known as *stereotyping*. The same ‘prejudice attitude’ is observed in the social categorization process. This tendency to focus on similarities and qualities within our own group is known as *ethnocentrism*. In the seminal book of LeVine and Campbell, Sumner argues that ethnocentrism is a “*view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it*” (LeVine and Campbell 1972).

The investigation of the group definition draws to end here. This being said, the important concept of social categorization shall be detailed further in the next section on *Social Identity*. Before we move on to the next section on the social identity theory, we will provide the reader with a few critical observations on group theories. It seems that the literature on group dynamics tends to focus on rivalries between groups while giving very little insight on the existing tensions within a group. Indeed, we tend to disagree with Sumner's vision of the in-group as being ordered and peaceful. On the contrary, it appears that the coercion that may exist within a group to force people to be in line with the group's 'cultural norms' are rather significant.

3. Social Identity

3.1. Basic Identity Process

The origins of identity processes are found in both identity and social identity theories. *Identity theory* find its source in structural symbolic interactionism (Stryker 1977) whereas the *Social Identity theory* began with work on social categorization (Tajfel et al. 1971). Regardless of the differences between these two theories, identity is simply a cognitive mechanism constructed through the accumulation of a number of recognizable characteristics that separate 'us' from 'them' (Wilbrink 2014). Identity is also to be understood as a mechanism of emotional need for self-esteem (Tajfel 1978). The more salient social identities are, the more members of a group will differ (Korostelina 2007: 24). Both identity and social identity are constructed. As we will see in the next section,

collective identity is a social construction; it is a mental, often imagined, construction (Anderson 1991). As suggested by our introduction, and more generally by our research question, this study will focus on social identity processes.

For more than four decades, the study of social identity has been among the major concerns of scholars across different fields of social sciences, including the one of conflict resolution. This is because, as many have argued, the study of social identity is crucial to our understanding of social realities and the presence of a subsequent widespread “*scholarly focus on the ‘social construction of identity’*” (Somers 1994: 605). As has been suggested in the introduction of this chapter, special attention should be paid to the social identity dynamics and group mechanisms in order to grasp a better understanding of how a collective identity and the representation a group works, based on its own history and of the ‘other’.

3.2. What is Social Identity?

According to Korostelina (2007: 15), social identity is nowadays considered as one of the most popular concepts of social sciences and has gradually become a prism through which important aspects of social life are explored and assessed. She defines it as “*a feeling of belonging to a social group, as a strong connection with social category, and as an important part of our mind that affects our social perceptions and behavior*”. Social identity, rather than being inherent, is socially constructed and influenced by the existence of social structure (Tilly 1996; Korostelina 2007). Deaux argues that “*the social*

nature of identities implies that there is a socially based construction of meaning as well, leading people to show consensus in at least some aspect of the identity definition” (Deaux 2000: 6). In addition, Snow argues that collective identities are rarely constructed *carte blanche*, but are rather “*forged not only with the materials suggested by the primordialist and structuralist perspectives, but with and through the experience of collective action itself*” (Snow 2001). This is also the approach we will adopt in the present study. The main hypothesis of this study is that the collective identity of Palestinians is a complex and evolving construction built upon key cognitive elements available in the Palestinian community’s cultural reservoir. Poetry is seen as part of this *shared cultural reservoir*.

As said in the previous section, social identity-building leads to a separation between ‘them’ and ‘us’. Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggested that there are three mental processes involved in the evaluation of others as ‘us’ or ‘them’, namely *Social Categorization*, *Social Identification* and *Social Comparison*. The theory of social identity stresses the critical importance of two aspects: one cognitive and one emotional. While the cognitive basis of social identity is the notion of social categorization and comparison, identifying with a group reflects an emotional dynamic. It is the cognitive-emotional involvement that strengthens a person’s social identity (Korostelina 2007: 24).

3.3. Theoretical Approaches to Social Identity

3.3.1. Social Categorization

Crisp and Turner argue that the process of social categorization “*is central to explaining intergroup relations, because without it, there would be no conflicts or difficulties between different groups*” (Crisp and Turner, as cited in Camilleri 2014). According to Tajfel and Turner, the concept of social categorization is at the core of the group’s creation. According to them, the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups (social categorization) is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination and favor our own group (Tajfel et Turner 1979: 13). Intergroup categorization leads to in-group favoritism and discrimination against the outgroup. In other words, we can define social categorization as:

“a division of people into distinct groups under conditions in which such factors as social interaction, cooperative independence, and attitudinal similarity are absent. Subjects are divided into groups on an ad hoc, trivial, and sometimes explicit random bias; group membership is anonymous, and there is no social interaction within or between groups, nor link between self-interest and intergroup responses [...] subjects introduce ingroup favoritism into their responses towards anonymous ingroup and outgroup members” (Hogg et al. 1986).

It must be clear that what we are describing here is the result of a conflictual situation. All these subjects are members of a highly competitive and insecure society.

Therefore, we are not describing ‘human nature’ but rather existing behavior in conflictual situations.

In this context, individuals are *depersonalized*; a person is no longer viewed as a unique unit but as part of a larger system of interchangeable social identities, the we-group or collectivity. Group identity is the product of a common and shared membership in this group. Members consider themselves as part of a social category. As noted by Tajfel and Turner, “*we can conceptualize a group, in this sense, as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it*” (Tajfel et Turner 1979: 15).

Social categories are explained as different levels of self-categorization (K. V. Korostelina 2007). This social category of self-defines an individual in terms of a shared similarity with the in-group category in contrast with the other social groups. Thus, we think in terms of “*we against them*”. Self-categorization theorists consider social identity as the process that changes an interpersonal behavior to an intergroup one (Trepte 2006). This suggests that personal and social identity represent different levels of self-categorization (Turner, as cited in Trepte 2006: 257). Finally, it is worth mentioning that categorization is a dynamic process that depends on the context of situations and is influenced by the multitude of interrelations within this context (Oakes, Haslam, and

Turner, as cited in Korostelina 2007: 25). This is why, as suggested in the beginning of this section, social categorization is the process at the basis of intergroup confrontation.

3.3.2. Social Identification

Because social identity is not an inherent and natural aspect of individuals, the individual's consciousness of their social identity is crucial. The process that leads to the state of identity is known as the process of social identification. According to Korostelina, this process is a "*permanent, incomplete, and open process of socialization that prompts one to search actively and independently for one's own personality and strengthens the subjective component in the formation of self-conception*" (K. V. Korostelina 2007). The process of identification has three stages (K. V. Korostelina 2007):

- i. First stage: Individuals define themselves as **members of a social group**
- ii. Second stage: Members of the social group learn the group's **stereotypes and norms**
- iii. Third stage: Group categories **influence the perception and understanding** of all situations in a particular context.

In other words, we adopt the social identity of the group we categorize ourselves in. There will be an emotional significance to one's identification. Salient social identity leads to the individual's depersonalization. This process strengthens the perception of a

difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’. According to Korostelina, “*this theory demonstrates that the ‘collective self’ explains most group phenomena and why individual interests do not play an important role in group dynamics*” (K. V. Korostelina 2007).

3.3.3. Social Comparison

Once an individual has categorized themselves as part of a group and identified themselves with the norms and stereotypes of the group, they will tend to compare their in-group with the outgroup. In a conflict situation, people tend to think that in order to maintain and increase our self-esteem (the collective self), we need to have a feeling of superiority when thinking of our group. According to the theory of *positive distinctiveness*, not only do people want to differentiate themselves from members of the outgroup, but they want to do so in a way that puts them in a positive light (Crisp and Turner, as cited in Camilleri 2014). According to them, positive distinctiveness refers to the “*combined desire to be differentiated from outgroups, and to be differentiated in way that is in-group favoring*” (Crisp and Turner 2014: 220). The concept of *metacontrast* stresses the fact that differences within an in-group are smaller than those between in-groups and outgroups (K. V. Korostelina 2007). The formation of categories is based on intergroup similarities and differences. In this sense, the similarity-emphasizing and differentiation processes are not independent but rather are part of the same social categorization method. It is through metacontrast that individuals analyze intergroup differences by comparing them with in-group ones.

According to the model of *subjective group dynamics* (Marques, Abrams, and Serôdio 2001), individuals derive self-esteem from the group they belong to. People not only discriminate against other groups to boost the relative positivity of their own, but they also monitor the coherence of the in-group and reject any ‘deviants’ who could threaten the in-group as a source of positive self-esteem (Marques, Abrams, and Serôdio, as cited in Crisp and Turner 2014: 220). Members of the group have to act in a way that corresponds and respects the in-group’s norms and values. This eventually leads individuals to more depersonalization and self-stereotyping: Individuals take on the characteristics associated with the prototypic qualities of their group (Crisp and Turner 2014: 221).

According to Volkan, when a group defines and differentiates itself, it almost invariably develops some prejudices for its own group and against other groups (Volkan 1998: 22). The intergroup boundary and relations between members of the in-group are reflected in the narratives of the group and create the basis for collective identity (Tilly, as cited in Korostelina 2007: 30). In a conflict, members of each group will try to assert the positive character of their cause. They will declare that their cause is just and the sacrifice of in-group and out-group deviants are necessary. Over time, such declarations will become embedded in the group’s *Collective Axiology* (Rothbart et Korostelina 2006).

3.4. Critics of the Social Identity Theories

If indeed, the social identity theory has a broad influence and is considered as “*the first social psychological theory to acknowledge that groups occupy different levels of a hierarchy of status and power, and that intergroup behavior is driven by people’s ability to be critical of, and to see alternatives to, the status quo*” (Hornsey 2008: 207), it has not been spared of criticism. Before we explore the concept of collective axiology, the main critics made to the social identity approach have to be acknowledged.

First, we agree with Hornsey (2008) on the fact that there is a lack of contextual rigor in the theories of social identity. Hornsey highlights the use by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues of the ‘minimal group paradigm’ in which participants were allocated into groups on the basis of arbitrary criteria (Hornsey 2008: 205). The group had no history and no future outside of the laboratory. Moreover, and as previously stated, it seems that these theories understand groups as internally monolithic and do not acknowledge the power relationships within groups. It seems to us that these power relations are fundamental as they are at the basis of the group’s ideology formation. We will argue that members of the group do not only emphasize the group’s qualities and respect its norms due to a need for self-esteem. Rather, we think that there is some kind of norm and ideology enforcement within the group. We are not arguing that complying to the group’s rules is only due to a fear of coercion, but that this notion is to be taken into account.

Rabbie and Horwitz (1988) argue that the social identity theory fails to distinguish between social categories and social groups as dynamic entities. Rather, they suggest that we should explore how individuals - through the interdependence of goals, outcomes, and needs – grow to develop a sense of ‘groupness’ or ‘entitativity’ with others (Rabbie and Horwitz, as cited in Hornsey 2008: 212). The idea is that rather than observing artificial uncontextualized groups, we should focus on the complex connections between individuals with different backgrounds and goals, as well as find a sense of ‘unity’ in a group.

Other authors have centered their criticisms on the ‘self-esteem hypothesis’. As previously stated, we tend to disagree on the centrality of this concept. We do however agree that this idea is fundamental, but what is questionable is the way this principle is reduced to simple, testable predictions. According to Hornsey (2008: 215), “*in recent years, the motivation for distinctiveness and self-definition has replaced self-esteem as the most researched motive for group behavior*”.

In an essay, Hornsey and Jetten (2004: 248) draw attention to what they define as “*a basic conflict between two fundamental human motivations: the need to experience group belonging and the need to feel like a different individual*”. If as described in the previous sections on the social identity theory, the need for belongingness with others is fundamental and a powerful human drive, we should also acknowledge the motivations to differentiate the self from others as a way to define our own unique identity (2004). In

other words, there is a need to articulate the interconnections between the individual's desire for distinctiveness and the group belonging and self-enhancement as described in the social identity theory.

There is an oversimplification of in-group favoritism and social consensus but also of intergroup hostile behaviors. Indeed, and as argued by authors like Brewer (1979), if the social identity theory is successful in explaining in-group favoritism, it fails to explain 'exceptions' such as outgroup derogation to intergroup hostilities.

Sidanius and his colleagues (2004) draw attention to another lacuna of social identity theories, namely its inability to explain institutional discrimination. We want to make it clear here that we acknowledge the fact that institutional discrimination is not the main focus of social identity theory. Pratto and al. (2006) developed the social dominance theory to make up for this lacuna. The social dominance theory assumes that "*we must understand the process producing and maintaining prejudice and discrimination at multiple levels of analysis, including cultural ideologies and policies, institutional practices, relations of individuals to others inside and outside their groups, the psychological predispositions of individuals, and the interaction between the evolved psychologies of men and women*" (2006: 272).

4. Collective Axiology

Central to our research is the concept of *Collective Axiology*. A Collective axiology can be defined as:

“a system of value-commitments that define which actions are prohibited, and which actions are necessary for specific tasks. It provides a sense of life and world, serves to shape perceptions of actions and events, and provides a basis for evaluating group members. A collective defines boundaries and relations among groups and establishes criteria for ingroup/outgroup membership” (Rothbart et Korostelina 2006: 4).

Through its collective axiology, a group will trace its development from a sacred past extracted from mythic episodes. *The Nakba* is clearly part of this sacred past, around which Palestinians collectively build their value-commitment system. In this sense, collective axiology can be understood as a *“set of constructions that are used to validate, vindicate, rationalize, or legitimize actions, decisions, and policies”* (Korostelina 2007). We can see collective axiology as a tool used by the group to make sense of conflictual episodes of their history, as well as an instrument to solidify the group. It is a common moral and value system that offers moral guidance to the group members on how to treat other in-group members, as well as outgroups (Korostelina 2013a). It not only represents group norms but, collective axiology also shapes value commitments that intensify group differences (Korostelina 2013b).

According to Korostelina, a collective axiology includes three different constructed forms, namely the *mythic narrative*, *sacred icons* and *normative orders* (Korostelina 2007: 87-88). The following three sections present the theoretical discussions on these three concepts. While proceeding with the discussion of these three ‘*constructed forms*’, connections are made with the Palestinian case study, so as to underline the relevance of the concept of collective axiology with our research.

4.1. Mythic Narrative

In order to understand the way Palestinians think of the *Nakba*, one should explore the concept of mythic narrative. Myths are stories that create a vision of the social community continuity through the recounting of its past (Korostelina 2013b: 27). Both the collective perception of the events experienced during the *Nakba* and the way poets (presented here as storytellers) make sense of them are better understood through the prism of Rothbart and Korostelina’s definition of mythic narratives:

“Stories of the threatening Other gain potency through dissemination of shocking images, harrowing anecdotes, and accounts of violence. Over time, such stories solidify perceptions of the Other through seemingly fixed negativities that are grounded, presumably, in a common place of origin, a shared ancestry, or common flaws. Through the power of such images, certain particularities of places, times, and actors become sacred to both storytellers and listeners” (Rothbart et Korostelina 2006: 37-38).

Mythic events such as the *Nakba* do not occur in chronological times, in the sense that its sacred character lifts it outside the tide of sequential events. The event acquires archetypal meanings that will shape group consciousness. It becomes a prototype of a normative order and shapes the way the ‘other’ is perceived (Rothbart et Korostelina 2006: 38). Fundamental to our research is the transmission of myths. According to Rothbart and Cherubin, protagonists of a conflict find guidance in the tales of past trauma and injustices like the *Nakba*. Such tales of suffering tend to perpetually solidify the past’s brutality, offering ‘insight’ to the sources of hostility and guidance for the actions that need to be taken (2002: 60). We will come back to the specific question of a trauma’s transmission mechanisms in the next chapter.

4.2. Iconic Order

In protracted violent conflict such as the long-lasting conflict of the Middle-East, *Icons* function as the graphic expressions of negativities: “*A particular episode, event, action, or encounter is privileged, venerated, and almost sanctified in this transition in the minds of the faithful*” (Korostelina 2007: 88). It is through the use of icons that uncertainties and doubts about the other are suppressed. This process of icon-making contributes to the general denigration of the other. Through the icon-making process, images of a particular event, experience or action are converted into collective symbols intelligible to the group (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 39).

As an example, in the case of the *Nakba* and the right of return, narratives are partly centered on *territorial icons*. According to Rothbart and Korostelina, a nationality seems to be forever linked to a homeland (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 40). As we will see in the next section, this is also the opinion shared by most of the scholars who have written on nationalism, such as Anderson (Anderson 1991). Liisa Malkki suggests that the territorial icons associated with terms such as ‘native’ and ‘nature’, foster essential notions of social identity, rooted in the soil of a territory (Malkki, as cited in Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 40). Accordingly, we will be able to focus our exploration of the Palestinian poetry on a specific lexical repertoire. For instance, when exploring the occurrence of the concept of ‘homeland’ in the poetical work, we must focus on the metaphorical repertoire of ‘nature’.

4.3. Normative Order

Finally, the process of axiological difference is centered around the formation of a normative order defined through dualities of good/evil or virtuous/vicious. The world is understood in morally binary terms (Korostelina 2008). In other words, to be able to understand “who we are”, we first must define “who the other is”: the enemy. Such divisions are highly emotional. Simultaneously, the creation of salient identity fosters stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination, while direct interactions with its members is avoided (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 41).

4.4. Collective generality and Axiological balance

Two variables characterize the dynamics of collective axiology: the degree of *collective generality* and the degree of *axiological balance*. Because of the limited space allocated to this research, we will not be able to give an exhaustive description of these two concepts. Nevertheless, a brief overview will be provided so that the reader is informed about the basics of collective axiology's dynamics.

The degree of **collective generality** refers to “*the ways in which ingroup members categorize the Other, how they simplify, or not, their essential character*” (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 46-47). An in-group collective generality is determined by four criteria:

- i. Homogeneity of perceptions and behaviors of outgroup members,
- ii. Long-term stability of their beliefs, attitudes and actions,
- iii. Resistance to change in their ideas about the other,
- iv. The scope or range of category of the other.

Therefore, a high level of collective generality is linked to the idea that an outgroup is homogeneous, has fixed patterns of behaviors and is committed to durable and rigid beliefs and values. A low level of collective generality reflects the perception of the outgroup as being different, with multiple behaviors and ready for transformation.

Naturally, the degree of collective generality can change over time (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 47).

Axiological balance refers to “*a kind of parallelism of virtues and vices attributed to groups. When applied to stories about the Other, a balanced axiology fosters positive and negative characterizations*” (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 49).

Balanced axiology leads to the recognition of morality, as well as immorality of both the in-group and the Other (K. Korostelina 2008: 464). While a high degree of axiological balance reflects one’s faults and failures, a low degree of axiological balance is the idea that not only is the in-group morally pure and superior, but an outgroup is of an evil nature. The low degree of axiological balance promotes “*tunnel consciousness*” and a lower capacity for independent thought. This dynamic reinforces the in-group’s sense of superiority and the ‘US versus Them’ duality (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006: 49).

According to Rothbart and Korostelina, there are four different patterns of collective axiology and four identity groups connected to them (2006: 48-51). This research shall focus on the first and second types as they are, in our opinion, those that correspond the most to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

i. Type 1: low axiological balance and high collective generality

This type of collective axiology is familiar to cases of protracted conflict. The in-group is considered as sacred and requires obedience. This type of

collective identity is very often associated with extreme forms of nationalism. In this case, *“the narratives of ingroups and outgroups reflect the duality of perception in which the Others are portrayed as evil and vicious and ingroups are perceived as virtuous and moral”* (Korostelina 2008: 465).

ii. Type 2: low axiological balance and low collective generality

While the in-group views itself as pure and glorified, the outgroup is seen as having mixed values and virtues; their multiple voices and ability to change are acknowledged. In this case, connections and collaboration with the ‘best’ members of the outgroup are possible (Rothbart et Korostelina 2006: 50-51).

5. Boundaries and Discourse of Differences

5.1. Intergroup Boundaries

According to Lamont and Molnar, the idea of ‘boundaries’ has come, in recent years, to play a key role in new lines of scholarship across social sciences, including those regarding social and collective identity, cultural membership as well as racial and ethnic group positioning, to mention only but a few (Lamont et Molnár 2002). Barth defines social identity as the end product of border formation, defined by the contrast between *“them”* and *“us”* (Barth, as cited in Korostelina 2007: 16). Similarly, for Tilly, social identities are based on boundaries that distinguish between *‘ingroup’* and *‘outgroup’* (Tilly 2005). He argues that,

“much of what people loosely call ‘identity politics’ consists of struggles over legitimation and recognition. The struggles take place within boundaries, across boundaries, over the placement and character of boundaries, around stories attached to those boundaries, and about relations between people sharing a common answer to the question ‘Who are you?’ on one side and other political actors, including agents of government, on the other” (Tilly 2003: 34).

Charles Tilly defines boundaries as *“any contiguous zone of contrasting density, rapid transition, or separation between internally connected clusters of population and/or activity for which human participants create shared representations” (Tilly 2005: 132).* Therefore, the operation of social boundary is simultaneously constituted of:

- i. Distinctive relations between sites on one side
- ii. Distinctive relations between sites on the other side
- iii. Distinctive relations across the zone between the two
- iv. Shared representations of the zone itself, on each side

A boundary change consists of formation, transformation, activation and suppression of these four-part complexes (Tilly 2005: 132).

5.2. Boundary stories and narratives of differences

Boundaries are present in each group's narrative; members use the specific discourse of boundaries to define themselves and the other. According to Rothbart and Cherubin, "*the symbols of orders and borders bring into 'existence' what they convey: they (the symbols) delimit the interior from the exterior, the realm of the sacred from that of the profane, and the homeland from the foreign territory*" (2009: 60). This is a key idea to explore in our attempt to make sense of Palestinian poetry on exile and return. As argued by Jackson, frequently, "*storytellers seek to identify sources of violence, disruption, or violation of a moral (cosmic) order that are central to stories of conflict*" (Jackson, as cited in Rothbart et Cherubin 2009).

In her book '*Speaking of Violence*' (2013), Sara Cobb emphasizes the major importance of stories in conflicts. According to her, conflicts are central in the stories that are told and retold by the belligerents. These stories "*provide the architecture for hate and distrust at all levels of social relations, from international to interpersonal conflicts*" (2013: 3). Her idea is that the stories we tell about ourselves and of the 'other', in daily conversations, structure the very nature of our interpersonal interactions, as well as intrapsychic dynamic (2013: 6-7). According to Cobb, "*our stories capture us*" (Cobb 2013: 184). Her idea is that in conflict situations, stories come to capture the belligerents. This is because "*each narrative and each narrative genre functions to limit the nature of the subjectivity that can be enacted*" (2013: 184).

For Cobb, the *Nakba* is to be understood as a story in the sense that “*it creates underground tunnels, it authorizes networks of insurgency*”, furthermore, the story of *Al-Nakba* defines “*the contours of Palestinian identity itself*” (2013: 3).

6. National Identity

As our study focuses on the Palestinians’ collective identity and memory, it would be more insightful to change the discussion from social identity to national identity. As the present research does not focus on the question of national identity and nationalism, the next section will only present a brief overview of the concept.

A common approach to the concepts of *Nation* and *National Identity* is to start by analyzing the related ideas of *ethnicity* and *ethnic groups* (Smith 1991). Ethnicity is a good starting point to study national identity as it is considered as a feeling of solidarity between people who see themselves as distinct from others (Banks 1996). According to Smith, probably the most prolific writer on nationalism and ethnicity, *ethnies* can be understood as “*named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity*” (Smith 1986). Throughout his research, Smith argues that the origins of national identity are to be found in ethnic identity as a pre-modern form of collective cultural identity (Guibernau 2004). According to him, a cultural identity is characterized by a sense of continuity and shared memories. There is “*a felt filiation, as well as a cultural affinity, with a remote past in which a community was formed*” (Smith 1991: 33). This sense of

continuity is at the core of the nationalist doctrine. It is this idea of cultural roots and shared history that makes the emergence of a national identity possible.

National identity can be seen as a form of collective identity that involves some sense of political community. According to Smith, national identity has a complex and abstract nature. He defines it as “*a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myth and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members*” (Smith 1991: 14). Many have criticized this definition for not being able to categorize nations according to their essence (e.g. Spanish from the Basques or Belgian from the Fleming) (Connor 2004; Guibernau 2004). In this research, given the particularities of the Palestinian identity, I will also argue that this definition is too restrictive. Indeed, it will be difficult to talk of a Palestinian identity if a prerequisite is the existence of a shared territory. The specific Palestinian identity shall be explored further in this section. Similarly, while Smith insists on the subjective nature of national identity (Smith 1991; 2002), I will argue, as did Guibernau (2004), that the most relevant quality of a national identity’s components is whether they are considered as genuine by those sharing a common identity. In this perspective, the sense of common identity “*need not, and in nearly all cases will not, accord with factual history*” (Connor, as cited in Guibernau 2004). This is because nations frequently originate from the mixing of people from various ethnic origins. Subsequently, what is actually important is not chronological or factual history but the collective history felt and experienced by the group itself. This feeling of shared history is key to the formation

of national identity as it fosters a sense of belonging among the group members which engenders loyalty and social coherence among fellow-nationals (Guibernau 2004: 135).

Returning to the core of this research, namely culture, we should try to identify the relations existing between culture and the various components of national identity. A good analytical starting point is the idea of *nationalism*. Benedict Anderson, in his seminal work, “*Imagined communities*” (2001), attempts to shed new light on the “*anomaly of nationalism*” (2001: 4). He describes nationalism as a cultural artifact, a socio-historical construction; it does not represent an objective reality but an ‘invention’ and collective construction. The central idea of his reflection is that nationalism is a cultural artefact, a product of the combination of various historical forces. He suggests that “*nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being*” (Anderson 2001: 12).

According to Anderson (2001: 6-7), there are four fundamental qualities of a nation:

- i. It is *imagined*. Members of a nation never get to know most of their fellow-members. Nations are ‘invented’ and do not represent any objective historical reality.

- ii. A nation is *limited* in the sense that it does not include all human beings but a limited group of people.
- iii. It is *sovereign*, or at least it aspires to be.
- iv. It is imagined as a *community*, and creates a sense of common bonds between its members. It is conceived as “*a deep, horizontal comradeship*” (2001: 7).

In Anderson’s vision of a nation, there is the idea that a nation state systematically emphasizes an immemorial past and goes into limitless future. It is simply “*the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny*” (2001: 12). Anderson suggests that nationalism has to be understood as similar to the large cultural system that precedes it, from which it originated.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW II: THEORIES ON COLLECTIVE MEMORY MECHANISMS

1. Introduction

As explained in the previous section, the notion of *memory* is a key component of this research. This concept is mainly used in the academic sphere to denote the way in which people construct a sense of the past (Confino 1997). It is both used to describe and explore the memory of people who experienced an event, the representation of the past and the making of it into a collective and shared knowledge by successive generations (Confino 1997), in a given group, through what Yerushalmi called “*vehicles of memory*” such as books, films, poems and others (Yerushalmi et Bloom 1996b). Among all those potential memory vehicles, I chose to focus on poetry. This is not a random choice. We will come back to the question of poetry as a specific vehicle of culture and memory in the next and last chapter of our literature review. This chapter shall focus more on the mechanisms through which memory is developed, shared and transmitted. Particular focus will be given to the work of Vamik Volkan and Marc Howard Ross, as well as the concept of trauma transmission.

2. Collective memory mechanisms

In popular thinking, memory is understood as specific to the individual mind. In his seminal work on memory, *Watergate in American Memory* (1992), Schudson argues that memory is essentially social and is located in rules, laws, books, standardized procedures, and so forth. Memory may “characterize groups” by revealing a debt owed to the past and expressing “*moral continuity*” (Schudson, as cited in Klein 2000: 130). Memory here is presented as a structural component of societies. According to Hutton’s *History as an Art of Memory* (1993), memory consists of two moments: repetition and recollection. While the first involves the presence of the past, the second involves present representations of the past (Hutton, as cited in Klein 2000: 132). In 1993, Funkenstein in *Perceptions of Jewish History*, argues that collective awareness presumes collective memory and that as for language, collective memory can be characterized as a system of signs and symbols (Funkenstein, as cited in Klein 2000: 133). In this research, poetry is understood as part of this symbolic system.

For many scholars interested in the study of memory, ‘trauma’ is the key concept of authentic forms of memory. As already suggested in the introductory chapter, the Nakba constitutes a major trauma (psychocultural drama) for the Palestinian community. The following discussion shall offer more of a theoretical insight into the concept of trauma. Special attention will be paid to the concepts of psychocultural narrative, narratives as memory, psychocultural dramas, and postmemory.

3. Psychocultural interpretations and Dramas

Members of a group, when attempting to make sense of their collective experiences, use stories that will serve as explanations and legitimations of the experienced events. These stories are referred to as *psychocultural narratives*. They all use powerful images and emotionally powerful judgements about our own group experiences and opponents (Ross and Kenan Jr 2008). However, narratives are not always internally consistent and the way people portray their own group and the opponents may vary (Kaufman 2001). People use group narratives especially when they are disoriented because the shared image they draw link people together and provide reassurance and reinforce the group's worldviews. However, these intra-group narratives are not always consistent and their meaning may be understood differently among members (Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 9). They must be understood as broad generalities. Thus, psychocultural narratives are "*grounded in selectively remembered, interpreted experiences and projections from them that resonate widely*" (Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 9). In this research, the poetical narrative on the right of return is understood as such. Then, why is it interesting to explore this type of narratives?

Psychocultural narratives are worth studying as they are reflectors and sometimes exacerbates or causes conflict (Volkan 1997; Ross and Kenan Jr 2008). As reflectors, they tell us how those involved in a conflict make sense of it, what they think the conflict is about. It tells us how groups understand the social and political environment they live in (Roy, as cited in Ross 2007: 30). They reveal deep fears, perceived threats and past

grievance that thrive in a conflict (Ross 2007: 30). Moreover, they play a causal role when they frame cognition and emotions in ways that structure actions considered as plausible by groups, shaping what constitutes evidence and how it is to be used (Bates, de Figueiredo and Weingast, as cited in Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 10). Therefore, narratives may be of dramatic importance in limiting the range of options and actions that can be taken seriously by actors of a conflict. Finally, they evoke past events as metaphors and lessons for the future and emphasize collective memory.

According to Kaufman, groups recount their narratives in a chronological way that blends key events, heroes, metaphors and moral lessons (Kaufman, as cited in Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 11). This recounting process can be understood as part of what we defined previously as collective memory that connect people of a same group across time and space, for individuals “*commemorate the past and actively make sense of the world through processes of social communication*” (Devine-Wright 2003: 10-11). Collective memories are selective and what is emphasized is facilitated through socially produced memory devices that serve as repositories of group memories (Halbwachs, as cited in Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 11). In our case, poetry is one of these devices. The idea of an object, physical or conceptual, that will serve as a vehicle of memory, is found in the work of many authors with different names.

A concept similar to the one of the memory vehicle is Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*. According to Pierre Nora, “*memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures,*

images, and objects [...] memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative” (Nora 1989: 9). Poetry can be understood as a *lieu de mémoire*, because it is invested by the author’s imagination with what Nora calls a *symbolic aura* (1989: 19). These *lieux* are created by the interaction of memory and history; their main role is to stop time so one can understand and never forget (Nora 1989). Similarly, Ross speaks of *symbolic landscape*, a set of images, physical objects and other expressive representations through which social and political meanings, as well as inclusion and exclusion are expressed (Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 8). These symbols reflect the group’s conscious and unconscious needs and wishes and evolve into cultural indicators such as flags, tales and songs that will indicate the group’s realistic and mythical history (Volkan 1998: 25). Finally, another interesting concept referring to the same idea is Volkan’s *ethnic marker*, in other words, objects (conceptual or concrete) that enhance the members’ sense of belonging to a group. Their use by group members is generally a reaction to a perceived threat. Not only do they connect individuals together as well as with their group, but they also strengthen and define the borders between the group and others (Volkan 1998: 83-85).

Central to our exploration of social identity and psychocultural interpretations is the concept of psychocultural drama. When exploring the questions of Nakba and right of return, one should explore this specific type of psychocultural narrative that is the psychocultural drama. Ross defines this concept as “*conflicts that arise over competing, and apparently irresolvable, claims that engage the central elements of each group’s*

historical experience and contemporary identity” (Ross, as cited in Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 12). They polarize events about non-negotiable cultural claims such as the right of return and other polarizing events whose manifest content involves deeply emotional and non-negotiable cultural claims, perceived threats and rights that become important because of their connections to core metaphors and collective narratives that embody a group’s identity (Ross 2006). As the drama unfolds, the conflict becomes deeply connected to a central element of a group identity (in our case, the right of return) (Ross 2006: 313). This leads to reactions among the group that are emotionally powerful, distinguish the different parties in conflict and that contain key elements of the broader conflict they are embedded in (Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 12). Dramas’ powerful emotional meanings link events across time and space increasing in-group solidarity and outgroup hostility (Volkan, as cited in Ross and Kenan Jr 2008: 12). The concept of psychocultural drama is adapted from Victor Turner’s (Ross 2006: 303) idea of *social drama* (Turner 1975). In Turner’s terms, social dramas are conflicts that are not ever fully resolved. Rather, they are settled for a time when conflicts are redefined away from incompatible principles to the symbolic and ritual domain (Turner, as cited in Ross 2006: 303).

Because dramas such as the Nakba are deeply rooted in a group’s collective memory, they are an interesting way to explore conflicts. The multiple levels of a conflict become much clearer through the lens of psychocultural dramas. By examining their development and escalation, one can better appreciate the crucial and central role played

by culture and social identity in conflicts (Ross 2006; Ross 2007; Ross and Kenan Jr 2008). Now that we have explored the concepts of memory and dramas, we need to explore the ways in which these social memories and dramas are transmitted. Through the exploration of transgenerational transmission mechanisms, we expect to reach a better understanding of the reasons why the trauma that represents the Nakba of 1948 still represents a major trauma for Palestinians nowadays.

4. Transgenerational transmission of memory

Now that we have presented the Nakba as a collective trauma, we have to identify how it has been transmitted through successive generations. In his analysis of trauma transmission, Volkan argues that the basis of transgenerational traumas is an unresolved mourning process. According to him, mourning is an “*involuntary response that occurs at the time of the loss of a loved one or loved possession or when a loss appears to be imminent*” (Volkan 1998: 36). The individual’s mourning process consists of two stages: the *crisis grief* (shock, denial, sadness and pain), and then the *work of mourning* (emotional acceptance of loss) that convert the relationship with the lost one or thing into a memory (Volkan 1998: 36-37).

It is important here to acknowledge the fact that the *work of mourning* has been primarily developed by Freud. In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), he defines mourning as “*the reaction to a loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on*”

(1917: 1). The same influences produce a state of melancholia. Despite their similarities, Freud considers that there are some fundamental differences between the two concepts. If for him mourning is a normal and healthy process of recovery after a loss, melancholia is an abnormal pathology. In addition, melancholia has some specific features that are absent from mourning:

- i. In melancholia there is no object loss. The object has been symbolically lost as an object of love.
- ii. Melancholia leads to “*melancholic inhibition*” (1917: 3) responsible for an extraordinary lowering of one’s self-esteem.
- iii. Melancholia is an unconscious process. This suggests that melancholia is “*related to an object-loss which which is withdrawn from consciousness*” (1917: 3).

In the same way that individuals undergo a mourning process, large groups and group members may go through the same psychological mourning process when faced with a collective loss. Alexander defines *cultural trauma* as a phenomenon that occurs when group members feel as though they have been subjected to “*a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways*” (Alexander 2004). A trauma collectively felt precipitates a collective response. Volkan argues that, in some cases, the work of collective mourning fades away and society

adapts to the loss. Much of the trauma is processed through mechanisms of collective mourning such as the building of monuments, considered as places of social mourning. These monuments become containers that preserve and limit emotions (Volkan 1998: 40). The author refers to them as *hot places*, a physical monument built to recall the group's trauma and losses (Volkan 2006). In this thesis, we will argue that other objects can work as collective psychological containers; among them is poetry.

In other cases, such as the one we are interested in, tragedies result in a much more complicated collective mourning process that involves longer-lasting damages to a large section of the group. In such cases, the trauma leaves community members helpless, humiliated and too afraid or angry to even initiate a mourning process. Indeed, they are incapable of turning their passive submission to the traumatic event into responsive and constructive activities (Volkan 1998: 39-40). Coping with this type of overwhelming events has to include the restructuration of the inner world and the integration of the events into the group's narrative meaning-system (Veerman et Ganzevoort 2001: 7). Frequently, this type of events, harmful to the social tissue of a community (Caruth 1995), are caused by other people, the enemy (Volkan 1998: 41), and involve a strong element of shock because of the radical change that occurs within a short period of time (Neal 1998: 3). This type of trauma exacerbates feelings of humiliation and helplessness. Moreover, in massive and collective trauma situations, victims may endure additional guilt for not having been able to protect their children (Volkan 1998: 42). The influence of such traumas affects all or most of the group and forges a link between the psychology

of individuals and the group's. A mental representation of the event, common to all members, begins to take shape. This mental representation is fundamental in the group's identity-building dynamic. Volkan argues that this representation is "*the consolidated collection of the shared feelings, perceptions, fantasies, and interpretations of the event*" (Volkan 1998: 45). When this mental representation becomes a burden that members of the group cannot resolve and when the mourning process is not achievable, their traumatized self-images are passed down to the next generations. The next generation is somewhat obliged to mourn and reverse the humiliation. As the traumatized self-image is passed down from one generation to the other, all refer to the same trauma that becomes a part of the group's identity (Volkan 1998).

Once a trauma has passed into the collective memory of a group and become part of its social identity, Volkan speaks of it as a *chosen trauma*. The group unconsciously defines its identity by the transgenerational transmission of injured self-images infused with the memory of a collective trauma (Volkan 1998). *Chosen glory*, on the other hand, refers to the mental representation of a collective success. It usually involves a triumph against another group. The most important element for understanding our research topic is the fact that chosen traumas bring strong feelings of humiliation, hate and vengeance along with them. These feelings then trigger unconscious identity-defense mechanisms (Volkan 1998: 83). According to Sandole, it is not just the historically-based 'chosen traumas' that are significant. Indeed, the collective memories of profound assault and loss continue to be experienced emotionally on a regular basis in '*collapsed time*', but so is

“each successive, ‘real world’ replay of the traumatic event which builds upon and reinforces the original sense of assault, loss and, therefore, grievance” (Sandole 2006: 66). By ‘reliving’ their trauma through narrative, the group members find meaning in mythic past. Through such storytelling, axiological divisions are solidified (Rothbart et Korostelina 2006: 45).

Another difficulty in our case is that the events of 1948 represent both a *chosen glory* for Israeli as it represents their war of independence, and a *chosen trauma* for Palestinians through the memory of Al-Nakba and subsequent exile. This lead to a specific phenomenon called *cultural contestation* (Ross 2007; Ross and Kenan Jr 2008). According to Ross, *“many cultural performances that are meaningful to one group are simply ignored by others [...] for example, in Israel, Jewish Israelis celebrate the anniversary of Israel’s independence each May, while Palestinian Israelis publicly commemorate “Al-Nakba”, the catastrophe, which places the same events in 1948 in an entirely different frame”* (Ross et Kenan Jr 2008: 15).

5. Postmemory

The phenomenon of postmemory was coined by Marianne Hirsch. This concept can be very basically defined as *“the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experience that they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up”* (Hirsch 2008: 106). As they are deeply

transmitted, these experiences seem to constitute memories in their own right. The existing connections between postmemory and past events is therefore more than a simple recall of experiences: it is the “*imaginative investment, projection, and creation*” of the past (Hirsch 2008: 107). In some cases, the narratives of the past are so overwhelming that the experiences of the contemporary generations are displaced.

CHAPTER THREE – LITERATURE REVIEW III: POETIC HISTORIES AND POETRY’S SALIENCE FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF MEMORIES

1. Introduction

As we explained throughout the previous sections, memory and traumas - such as the one of the *Nakba* - are transmitted from one generation to another through ‘*vehicles of memory*’ (Yerushalmi and Bloom 1996a; Volkan 1998; Volkan 2006; Ross 2007; Ross and Kenan Jr 2008; and others). Among all the potential memory vehicles, we chose to focus on poetry for various reasons. First and foremost because poetry is central in Palestinian culture and plays a fundamental role in the transmission of memory among the generations of the Palestinian collectivity (Ismael 1981). Similarly, Palestinian poetry is a very interesting prism from which to study the concepts of *exile* and *return* as “*Palestinian poetry is characterized by an intensive feeling of exile*” (Gohar 2011: 228). In this last section of our literature review, we will briefly explore the characteristics of poetry as a method of expression and transmission.

2. Poetry and the Palestinians

As we suggested previously, the poet plays a preeminent role in Palestinian society. According to Neisser (2000), “*not only does poetry maintain a central role in Palestinian society as the time-honored art form of the Arabs, but also Palestinian poets*

carry the additional role of being spokespersons, who must articulate the struggles, desires, and political views of the people”. Poetry plays a key role in the contribution of group narratives. Neuwirth goes as far as to label Mahmoud Darwish as the “*founder of discursivity [...] that is, one who plays a major role in producing a discourse*” (Neuwirth, as cited in Alenzi 2015: 224). The crucial role of the poet in safeguarding the collective memory of its people and their homeland is expressed by Darwish in his poem *I love you, I love you not* (Darwish 2013):

The trees of my country master the greenery growth

And I master reminiscence²

Here, Darwish suggests that his mission as a poet and as a Palestinian is to safeguard the memory by sharing it in his poetry. The parallel with the tree suggests that the relationship between the poet and his homeland is natural, rather than socially constructed.

3. The Role of Poetry

According to Fabb, poetry cannot be defined in terms of performance or function. Rather, it is subjected to three elements, namely language, form and memory (Fabb 2015). According to Furman, “*poetry has become an important tool for qualitative researchers due to its capacity to facilitate in-depth and penetrating inquiry*” (Furman

² Translation by (Alenzi 2015)

2004). In this same paper, he describes the use of poetry as a way to present the experience endured by the studied individuals. Indeed, not only does the poem give us a precious understanding of the poet's subjective experience, but it is formulated in a manner that is "*metaphorically generalizable*" (Furman 2007).

This notion of metaphoric generalizability is essential to my research: It refers to the relationship that may exist between poets and their audience. Even though a poem expresses the author's emotions, it also makes readers more empathic as they recognize themselves in the poem and will thus learn to view themselves in a novelistic way (Furman 2007). This complex relationship is at the core of what we referred to, in the previous section, as the intergenerational memory's transmission through poetry. The link between the poem and the reader's experiences can be understood through Bakhtin's concept of *double-voicedness* in which meaning is created through interaction between the speaker and the reader (Bakhtin et Holquist 1981). To put it simply, the writer's intentions and the reader's understanding are interrelated, yet, they sometimes differ. The collective interpretation of a poem may differ from the original idea the poet tried to convey.

The concepts we try to analyze are eminently subjective and it seems that only the poem, through the use of metaphors, allows for interplay between the individual's external and internal worlds, which can both be complex and contradictory (Furman 2007).

Finally, central to our study is the concept of metaphors. Lanham's working definition of a metaphor is "*changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it; assertion to identity than, as with simile, likeness*" (1991: 100). We chose this definition as it gives the idea of an action, a process. In addition to this definition, one needs to mention the complexity inherent to this concept. Dickins (2005: 2) defines it as "*a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used in a non-basic sense, this non-basic sense suggesting a likeness or analogy with another more basic sense of the same word or phrase*".

CHAPTER FOUR – METHODOLOGY

1. Research design and data collection

The main subject investigated in this study is the systematic exploration of the concepts of *exile, return and homeland* in Palestinian poetry since the beginning of the 20th century. Although we have been able to narrow down our research in terms of time and areas of study, a practical question remains: How will the study be structured? Our role is to provide a research as comprehensive as possible with various analytical choices.

Firstly, we have decided to focus on one author, namely Mahmoud Darwish. Practically, we will use Darwish's experiences as a poet and Palestinian throughout our study.

Darwish is by far the most famous and respected Palestinian poet. He enjoys a major national recognition. Moreover, a considerable number of researches have already tackled Darwish's poetry. However, only a few scholars have paid attention to the systemic impact of his poetry. Even though we will focus mainly on his poetical work, we will, from time to time, make brief references to Darwish's own experience. This is because, as suggested by Najami and Ajjawi (2014: 276), "*Mahmoud Darwish has lived a variety of experiences, witnessed the major events that shook the Arab world, and*

perceived Palestine tragedy from different angles. To a better understanding of his writing, it is useful to glance at some areas of Mahmoud Darwish's life that most influence his vision". However, in order to show that there is a continuity in Palestinian poetry throughout the 20th century, we will refer to other poets both prior and posterior to Darwish's oeuvre such as 'Barghouti' or 'Tuqan'. Other poets could just as well have been selected as valid sources. An analysis of more poems would likely result in a more exhaustive understanding of the cognitive mechanisms of Palestinians' memory on the Nakba and the subsequent importance of the return. However, in order to explore the evolution of Palestinian poetry over the course of a century, we have to limit our research to a specific number of authors. Nevertheless, we made sure that the selected poems are all well-known among the Palestinian collectivity and thus made sense in our study.

Secondly, we had to choose a way to approach Darwish's poetry. We will tackle his poetry through the use of metaphors. After analyzing his poetry, we have selected four major metaphors: Bloodlines, love, nature and mythology. These four categories represent four different conceptual metaphors linking a concrete domain with a more abstract domain in such a way that the former normally gives metaphorical structures to the latter (Nour Al Salem 2014).

The selection of poems was chosen following an inductive reasoning. The researcher has been studying the poets' selected work and have kept the poems that are the most significant for them. Although inductive reasoning yields a sufficient and

fruitful selection of relevant sources, it does not mean that more pertinent material could not have been found and used. Especially when considering that some poems might cover certain aspects of the Palestinian perception of the *necessity to return*, which our selected poems do not address. Nonetheless, we believe that the poem selected in the work of Mahmoud Darwish will give the reader a good and deeper insight into the Palestinian collective memory.

2. Ethic

My decision to work on Palestinian poetry is far from trivial and arise from the fact that I myself have Palestinian origins. Therefore, I have decided, out of intellectual honesty, to add this ethic section to explain how my Palestinian identity has influenced the evolution of the thought that led to this research topic, and more importantly, how it will influence the structure and content of the actual thesis.

First of all, this attempt to have a better understanding of my own culture and its poetry is a step forward in my personal will to make the Middle-Eastern conflictual situation improve. I have always felt strongly about the idea that a group can only feel secure about a narrative when it is more willing to look at the other one's narrative. Therefore, understanding my own culture is the first step in looking at the other's culture. The ultimate goal is to understand each other's narratives and come together with a single and shared narrative which could encompass the narratives of both sides of the conflict on important matters such as how we perceive our relationship with the land.

CHAPTER FIVE - ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

As we explained in the methodological chapter, this research will attempt to explore the concepts of *return* and *exile* in Palestinian poetry through the work of Mahmoud Darwish. For this purpose, the analysis is primarily based on Darwish's poems, but does sometime rely on other studies about the poet. Nevertheless, the arguments presented and the explanations we offer to his poems are the researcher's own views and opinions. However, and for the reasons we presented in the methodological chapter, references to the author's life will be made. As we suggested, the study of his poems will be enriched by the exploration of other poetical works from different periods. This is because, as we argued, the underlying hypothesis of this research is that there is a continuity and a uniformity in the symbolic reservoir of Palestinian culture. Mahmoud Darwish has to be understood as part of a cultural system, a complex and socially constructed field of meaning that we will try to explore and understand as holistically as possible.

The analysis will be divided according to the grand metaphors we initially presented. It has to be clear that even though we divided our research in different sections, we consider these different poetical and cultural elements as part of the same

system. They are different poles of a complex system entering a multilateral, complex and dynamic connection. This is why in the last section of our analysis we will present the system's general dynamics and discuss the global tendencies.

2. Preamble: A brief biography of Mahmoud Darwish

Mahmoud Darwish is considered as a prominent figure in the world of literature and poetry. He is one of the many Palestinians who were dislocated, jailed, but also exiled. As Nour Al Salem rightly reminds us, "*Darwish was described by many critics as a rarity in his field, and his works usually appeared in several editions*". Moreover, his experience of exile, homelessness and homeliness are of particular value for our study. Before we initiate the analysis of Darwish's poetry, we will dedicate this preamble to the presentation of this iconic figure³.

Darwish was born on 13 March 1941 in the village of Al-Birwa, East of Acre in Western Galilee, to a farming family. His grandfather taught him how to read as his father, a peasant, was killed by the Israeli army in 1948 and his mother was illiterate. In his poetry, Darwish constantly refers to his father and the Palestinian peasantry with admiration.

After the destruction of their village in 1948, Darwish's family fled to Lebanon. One year later, his family 'sneaked' illegally into what had become Israel, to discover a

³ The basic structure on which this short biography is based on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 11-14)

Jewish colony had replaced their village. They moved clandestinely to another Galilean town, namely Deir Al-Asad. However, it was too late for his family to be included in the new state's census of the Palestinian Arabs who lived in Israel. Thus, Darwish was unable to travel inside his own country without permission. This position of 'internal refugee' or 'illegal infiltrator' in his homeland sparked his interest. Some might even say his obsession, with the question of exile and return. It is during this period that he will develop the essential of his poetical vision.

His family's legal situation is 'regularized' in 1951. He became a second class citizen of the new state of Israel. He started writing at an early age and his first collection of poems, '*Wingless Birds*', was published in 1960. At that time, Darwish was only 19 years old but his poetry was already becoming locally famous. However, in an interview, (Darwish, Baydūn, et Wazen 2006: 13), he claims that he does not recognize this first book as it has been written and published in Israel. At that time, he integrated the Israeli Communist Party, the RAKAH. It was during his period as a communist activist that he wrote his famous poem: *Identity*. This poem was a way for the young poet to stand up against the obligation for the Palestinians to obey the Israeli Police's injunctions (Prémel 2010: 121). This is considered as the poet's first 'act of resistance'.

During the 60s, he was imprisoned several times but still managed to publish his second collection, *Olive Leaves*, in 1964. This major book made him a national poet and put him at the center of the Palestinian resistance movement. Darwish sees himself as

poet who writes as a response to a collective Palestinian need to be heard. However, this is not without any risk or danger for the poet. As he argues, when a poem is published, it becomes a public property for the poet no longer has a claim on it (Darwich, Bayḍūn, et Wazen 2006: 14).

After 1967 and the Six-Day War, he is placed under a restricted residence in Haifa (Prémel 2010). In search of liberty and intellectual freedom, he first went to Moscow and then to Cairo where he worked for the *Al-Ahram* daily newspaper. At that time, he decided to never come back to what had become Israel. According to Mansson (2003), this was perceived by some Palestinians as betrayal. In 1981, he moved to Lebanon where he founded the literary journal *Al-Karmel*. He stayed in Beirut from 1972 to 1982. Along with the PLO members, he was expelled from Lebanon during the 1982 Israeli invasion. He then wandered from place to place, from exile to exile. From Tunis, he moved back to Cairo and finally to Paris. In the French capital, the poet was able to explore the various cultures from around the world. In 1987, he became part of the PLO executive committee, while keeping his intellectual freedom and freedom of speech.

In 1993, along with other Palestinian figures such as his friend Edward Said, Darwish declared himself against the Oslo Declaration and, eventually, resigned from the PLO. During the 1990s, he lived in Amman and in Ramallah. During his time in the West Bank, his office was raided and his manuscripts destroyed by the Israeli Army (Mansson 2003). In 2000, he published *Mural*, his first poetry book in Arabic and French.

According to Nour Al-Salem (2014: 14), he was “*the best-selling poet in France and in the Arab World*”. Mahmoud Darwish died in 2008 in the United States after complications following an open-heart surgery. He was buried in Ramallah and honored with three days of national mourning.

History will remember him as one of the 20th century most prolific and successful poets. His poetry has evolved throughout his career making it difficult to categorize him or his work. He liked to think of himself as a poet of the *epic lyricism*, an artistic movement that he used to define as “*a tragic perception of history and the expression of a collective conscience of loss and mourning*” (Prémel 2010).

3. Bloodlines as a metaphor

3.1. Theoretical introduction

As we saw in the Literature Review, nationalism is among the strongest feelings that links people together. Among the most famous writers on the question of ‘Nation’, many have argued that the feeling of belonging to a nation is substantial and organic to the citizens. For Ernest Renan, the biggest name in French nationalism, the social group is an extension of the family as well as a structure and the rites of a nation which follow the family ones (Renan 1882).

Nevertheless, as Anderson notes, nations are ‘imagined’, in the sense that they are systems of cultural representation in which people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community (Anderson 1991). As such, nations are more than simply “*phantasmagoria of the mind*”. They are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed (McClintock 1993: 61). Nationalism is substantial to people’s identities.

Where the *Nation* is socially constructed, the family is perceived as more ‘natural’. If national brotherhood is a social construction, bloodlines are natural and therefore perceived as immutable. This is why metaphors of ‘family bonds’ are at the heart of most national narratives, including those we can observe in the poetical works of nationalist poets. This is even more accurate in tradition, such as the Arab tradition, in which a child is expected to be obedient and respectful to his parents. In Palestinian folktales, for example, children are presented as revering and presumably loving their parents, even when their parents are not as loving as they could be (Patai 1998: 15).

McClintock (1993) argues that “*nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space. The term ‘nation’ derives from ‘natio’: to be born*”. Closely related to our analyzed concept of *homeland*, there is the concept of “*motherland*”, the French *mère-patrie*⁴ and “*fatherland*”. If these three concepts have no

⁴ The symbol of the French motherland is Marianne, the personification of the French nation, leading and protecting all French citizens as in Delacroix’s magnificent artwork, *La liberté guidant le peuple*. We will come back to this specific question later on in our research.

real semantic differences, in the last two, there is also the connotation of the ‘ancestor land’ that is not found in *homeland*. The family trope offers a ‘natural’ figure to the national identity. Moreover, it will offer a ‘natural’ trope to figure out the historical time. According to McClintock, the ‘family’ offers “*an indispensable metaphoric figure by which hierarchical social distinctions could be shaped into a single historical genesis narrative*” (1993: 63). This ‘naturalization’ of the social bonds eventually develops a sense of ‘national family’ in which the relation to the nation and homeland derive from the ‘organic’ family structure. When it comes to the family structure and dynamic, despite a recent ‘westernization’ tendency, the Palestinian family model corresponds to the traditional Arabic family that can be described not only as patriarchal but also pyramidically hierarchical in regards to age and sex, and more. In the case of ‘the nation as a family’, the family unity is extended to all the members of the ‘national group’, the respect due to the patriarch is given to the national authority, and the love due to the mother is reflected onto the homeland. This idea gives nationalism the alibi of nature, and offers the collectivity a sense of ‘organic continuity’ beyond the limits of time and space.

3.2. Exploring poetry

In exile, the poet feels lost and nostalgic when reminiscing of his childhood home and people. This is particularly true when it comes to the mother figure. In Darwish’s most famous poem, ‘*To my mother*⁵’, Darwish expresses the long journey of detachment from his mother. Nevertheless, the words used seem to also refer to the relation of

⁵ Reference and translation of this poem has been found in (Al-Areqi 2014: 37-38)

detachment subsequent to his exile. As suggested by Al Areqi (2014: 37), “*two dear things leave their impression in one’s heart: his love for his mother and his love for his motherland*”.

*I long for my mother’s bread
My mother’s coffee
Her touch
Childhood memories grow up in me
Day after day
I must be worth my life
At the hour of my death
Worth the tears of my mother.*

In the first verse of the poem, Darwish reflects the concrete suffering of detachment with sweet memories of his mother’s coffee and touch. He also refers to the feeling of nostalgia towards his childhood, a classic theme of exile poetry. What strikes us from the beginning of the poem, is the evident symbolic link between the mother and the homeland for the exiles. If we consider the possibly implicit analogy between the ‘*mother*’ and ‘*homeland*’, we understand that the poet is haunted by the fear of exile. Indeed, he is uncertain of coming home again because of the length of his exile. His return seems impossible as exile will end the day he dies.

*And if I come back one day
Take me as a veil to your eyelashes
Cover my bones with the grass
Blessed by your footsteps*

*Bind us together
With a lock of your hair
With a thread that trails from the back of your dress
I might become immortal
Become a God.*

The veil reference expresses the feeling of insignificance the poet is reduced to with the mention of exile. The exile journey makes him appear as a bunch of bones. His last and only wish is to be blessed by his mother's footsteps and by the grass of his homeland. The exiled poet, even at his death, refuses to be detached from his mother and from his land. In this second verse, the analogy mother/son and homeland/people become even more unequivocal.

*If I touch the depths of your heart.
If I come back
Use me as wood to feed your fire
As the clothesline on the roof of your house
Without your blessing
I am too weak to stand.
I am old
Give me back the star maps of childhood
So that I
Along with the swallows
Can chart the path
Back to your waiting nest.*

In this last verse, the sacrificial logic is pushed even further by suggesting that he is ready to give up his life, to become wood for his mother's fire or a clothesline on the house's rooftop. No matter what condition the exiled poet shall have upon his return, he has to come back. The only thing that matters is for him to be back home. Without his motherland's blessing, he is weak and vulnerable. He lives only in his memories; unable to perceive any future in exile, the poet longs for his past childhood. He wants to follow the birds during their return journey⁶.

Through the analogy between the mother and the motherland, this poem symbolizes the strong tie between the homeland and the exiles. Unfortunately, long years of exile could not make the refugees and exiles forget their land and their sweet images of childhood (symbolized here by the mother's bread, coffee and touch). It is only through this unconditional love for the homeland and struggle to return that the exile fulfills his destiny. The love for his mother and his land makes him a God and gives him immortality. For all the love a person receives from his mother/motherland (bread, touch, or star maps are all expressive images of a beautiful childhood), he must be ready to die in order to be buried and blessed by her. This sacrificial logic is exclusively related to the concept of motherland; in the coming paragraphs we will see the ideas induced by the concept of fatherland.

⁶ The use of the bird as a metaphor will be explored in more detail in the upcoming section

According to Al Areqi (2014: 38), in this poem, Darwish “uses many similes to describe that matchless love for his motherland and his yearning to be stuck to his mother parts of body”, take me as a veil to your eyelashes; cover my bones with the grass blessed by your footsteps; bind us together with a lock of your hair with a thread that trails from the back of your dress; use me as a wood to feed your fire, ... Through these powerful and realistic images as well as the analogy between mother and homeland, Darwish emphasizes the great love and abnegation a ‘son of Palestine’ should have for his motherland, also the sacrifices he must make in order to return to her. We will argue that this poem is in a way ‘gendered’. There is an underlying assumption that the ‘imagined reader’ is a man. The poet addresses this man and urges him to act and fulfill his responsibility towards his motherland.

Interestingly, through our exploration of the Palestinian poetry, very few poems using this analogy between mother and homeland have been found in the period preceding 1948. Yet, this metaphor is frequently used in the post-Nakba poetry. In the direct aftermath of the 1948 war and the subsequent exile of Palestinians, the Palestinian poet Burhan al-Deen al-Abushi used the same analogy in his poem ‘*For the sake of your eyes, oh Su’ad*’⁷ which he dedicated to an orphaned Palestinian girl:

*The whole nation is mother to you
And eternity your father,
And all the young are your brothers.*

⁷ Reference and translation of this poem has been found in (Peled 1982: 176)

*Not only you have become orphan, O Su'ad,
But a whole generation,
When your father fell ...
O Palestine, proudly bear Sa'id's memory
For pride befits him who gave his life for you.*

Here again we have the notion of the homeland as a mother. Moreover, the poet goes as far as to suggest that all Palestinians are brothers. Palestine bears its children. As in Darwish's poem, it is as though the citizens who are buried in their motherland are blessed for eternity. This same need for exiles to re-unite with their land, even in death, is expressed in Fadwa Tuqan's later poem in 1978, '*Suffice me to die on its land*'⁸:

*Suffice for me to die on its land
And be buried in it
And be dissolved and consumed under its soil
And sprout grass upon its land
And give birth to a single flower*

In Palestinian poetry, the use of the 'mother' refers to the patriotic love and responsibility Palestinians have towards their blessed motherland. However, the 'father' in Palestinian poetry has, according to us, a different meaning. The first poem we will explore is Darwish's '*my father*'⁹, written in 1966:

⁸ Reference and translation of this poem has been found in (Lovatt 2010: 9)

⁹ The poem has been found in (Darwish et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation was found

*He turned his eyes away from the moon
He turned back to stir the soil while praying
In front of a cloudless sky
Then, he forbids me to set out on a journey!*

And later on in the same poem:

*And my father once told me
Praying for the stones:
Turn your eyes away from the moon
Watch out for the sea, ... and for the journey!*

In the poem's two verses, the father is described as the protector of the land. He is the farmer who takes care of the land. Here again, the land refers to the motherland, the family the father needs to protect. He is the protector of the blessed land (he prays for the soil); he longs for his son to stay with him in the homeland. He warns his son against the danger of exile. While the mother is the symbol of the beloved homeland, the father symbolizes the protector of the land and family. This vision corresponds to the patriarchal system we identified earlier. The vision of the father being the land's protector precedes the Nakba. An example of this is a Palestinian poem of 1936 known and recited by nearly every Palestinian and written by a Palestinian struggler just before he was executed by the British Mandate¹⁰.

*My tears are for, my country
And for a bunch of fledglings*

¹⁰ Reference and translation of this poem has been found in (Hijjawi 1968: 5)

*Hungry at home
Without a father.
Who will feed them after me?*

As for the mother, this image of the father involves a sense of responsibility among Palestinians: They must return to their homeland and defend it just like their own fathers did before them. It is a son's duty to return to the land his father 'lost'.

There is the idea that the 'fathers' failed as protectors. This failure is seen as a disgrace. The new generation of Palestinians wishes to regain their honor and pride. This desire is very well explained by Mai Masri in her documentary '*Children of Fire*' (1990) in which she said:

"To my parents' generation, the taking of the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 War was a terrible defeat and shame. But a new generation has grown up with Israeli occupation, a generation which has outgrown shame and found a sense of freedom. The Intifada is about a new pride, a new identity, a new way of life"

As argued by Volkan (1998: 43), *"because the elders have an influence on a child, the child absorbs their wishes and expectations and is driven to act on them. It*

becomes the child's task to mourn, to reverse the humiliation and feelings of helplessness pertaining to the trauma of his forebears". In his poem 'Male Anthem'¹¹, Darwish wrote:

- *Sir I am an Arab*

I had a hand to sow

A land that with his hands and his eye my father made fertile

I had shoes and a shade

A turban and tambourines

I had also...

- *Enough son!*

Your story weighs upon my heart

On my heart there are knives

This verse symbolizes the dialogue between two generations and appears to be addressed to Palestinian 'brothers', as a testimony from the generation of men who failed as protectors to the new generation of Palestinian men who have to return and protect it. We can imagine that the young person the poet is referring to was a child at the time of exile. He narrates his memories of the homeland to the elderly man. His tone is nostalgic when he refers to the traditional iconic Palestinian father who protects his family as an honest farmer. The old man, probably symbolizing the generation who lost the war and experienced the Nakba, is moved and overwhelmed by the remembrance of what once was. He feels guilty towards the young boy and the exile for they had to endure a lot due to their father's weakness. In the next verse, the young exile answers by taking matters into his own hands. As described in Volkan's analysis, it is now the next generation's

¹¹ The poem has been found in (Darwish et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation was found

role to reverse the trend, erase the feeling of humiliation and grasp the true meaning of returning home:

- *Let me end my anthem*

As a present from the ancestor to the grandchildren:

“We have sown, now it is your turn to harvest!”

If it is perceived as an honor and a sacred mission, the exiled’s mission to return is not devoid of constraints and suffering: it feels more like an inherited burden. An example of this central idea is Darwish’s poem ‘*A naïve song for the Red-Cross*’¹². In one of the verses, Drawish says:

They forbade me from playing on swings during the day

They kneaded my bread into the mud, my eyelashes in the dust.

They took my wooden horse

They made me carry the burden of my father

A whole night – I could not take it anymore! – lengthy as a year

Similarly, Mourid Barghouti, a Palestinian exiled poet, anticipates in ‘*Midnight*’¹³ the demands that the next generation of exiles shall encounter:

You, whose mother gave birth to you

In the homeland of the Orient,

Surrounded by poems and age-old laws, you will continue to see faces

Carved by ancient chisels

In the presence of which the beards of ages have gone grey

¹² The poem was found in (Darwich et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation has been found

¹³ Reference and translation of this poem was found in (Uebel 2014: 35)

Interestingly, in a poem entitled ‘*Whisper*’¹⁴, Tamim Barghouti, Mourid’s son, offers the perspective of a Palestinian born during exile. As an answer to his father’s anticipations he answers:

A whisper in the desert said repeatedly: “Come!”
I said to it: “Where are you, I don’t see you, tell me, who are you?”
It said: “Come!”
I asked: “Why?”
It said: “Come!”
I asked: “How?”
I stood still for perhaps I would see it.
But in the desert, of course, you only find the desert.
It returned my calls: “Oh young boy, why do you stop? Come.”
You confused my God, you only have this world. You have had enough.
It said: “Come.”
I waved my hand in the air, your father and the one after you shall be cursed,
And I walked
It then said to me: “You came.”

In this poem, the poet is called upon by an unknown feminine voice (as indicated by the gendered verbs in the original Arabic language). The feminine interlocutor is invisible. The narrator can only hear her voice: She is as a “*whisper in the desert*” (Uebel 2014: 36). As we will try to demonstrate later in this research, the woman is not a random choice. Indeed, as for the mother, the woman is also a metaphorical analogy which

¹⁴ Reference and translation of this poem was found in (Uebel 2014: 36)

symbolizes Palestine in Palestinian poetry. The call is one of duty for Palestine is commanding the exiled individual to return to her. The use of the word ‘cursed’ highlights the generational pressure on Palestinians. The right of return is, in this context, imperative. The young generation adopts and embodies the responsibility for homeland-revival. The fact that the voice is only a distant whisper accentuates the idea that returning is an inaccessible dream and that the return journey to the beloved, Palestine, will be a long and painful one. Moreover, the fact that the ‘whispering feminine being’ remains anonymous may refer to the new generation which never had the chance to be in direct contact with Palestine as they grew up during exile. Yet, the voice insists and continues to call upon him: “Come!”. Also, at the end of the poem, the narrator is cursed and forced to keep on wandering to hear the ‘whisper’.

Summarizing both the idea of ‘motherland’ and the father’s burden, Mamduh ‘Udwan, in his poem ‘*The Sword and the Rust*’¹⁵ (1964), presents the exiled Palestinian as a young man determined to win back his home through his own endeavors. In the poem, the young refugee asks his mother to hand him the sword his father left before he got eventually killed. The sword could symbolize the father’s burden that the mother (homeland) transmits to the young exile. The boy wants to take what he considers as his own responsibility. He refuses his exiled identity and takes back his dead father’s task of return. Addressing his mother, the boy says:

¹⁵ Reference and translation of this poem was found in (Sulaiman 1984: 115-116)

*I will not remain as a guest.
Without a command of God, I will shape my fate.*

...

*There, where my father died, I will die;
Hence fifteen years passed by me, waiting,
And now I am no more child*

Finally, it is interesting to highlight the way in which some poets literally rejected part of their parents' burden by severing the ties of previous generational traditions. It is the case of Samih Al-Qasim who judges the values of his parents in '*Incantation against planes*'¹⁶:

*O ... my miserable father, O ... My submissive mother
I throw to the devil the tribal tradition you bequeathed me.
I throw my humiliation and misery to the Dervish
To the dwarfs barking on their chairs.
I am crying out of the depths of hell.
Oh, the mud stuck on the shoes of my glorious days.
I am debating with you to death.*

Here, the poet refuses the task of mourning Volkan described: 'I throw my humiliation and misery'. He refuses to pay for his parents' misery. For him, the days of glory are now part of the past: 'The mud stuck on the shoes of my glorious day'. The very reminiscence of this past is a burden in itself. The poet is trying to escape his past and the obligation he has been forced to respect and fulfill.

¹⁶ Reference and translation of this poem was found in (Ghanim 2009: 30)

3.3. Conclusion

In this section, we saw that the Palestinian collective narrative is strongly related to the **patriarchal family system**. Even before the Nakba, the iconic Palestinian man is presented as an **honest farmer** who protects and loves both his family and his land. He is the family leader and a defender of the Nation. The relationship between the men is one of **brotherhood**; they work and fight together. The woman is described as a loving and caring mother who has to be protected and venerated. There is a clear and strong hierarchical system with the father as a leader and protector, and the mother as a vulnerable yet respected individual. Love for the Nation is built around the concept of **motherland**. Members of the group should care for and protect their Nation as their father did for his family and land. There is a clear **abnegation** for the Nation.

After the Nakba, the structure is the same but the role has changed. The father, or the man who is now humiliated failed to complete his mission to protect his family and the nation. He now lives in the past, in his memories. From a strong worker who lives in the present, he is now lost in a feeling of **nostalgia**. Without his land he is weak and lost. He and all his 'brothers' have lost their land and their honor along with it. Yet, the motherland is still in need of protection and the honor has to be regained. Sadly, the man is now too weak and it is the **new generation**'s responsibility to protect the land. They must be ready to make all the needed sacrifices out of respect for their fathers and for their mother's love. A clear **sacrificial discourse** is developed.

The young generation will interpret the obligation to return home in two different ways. Indeed, some will see in it a **blessing**, an opportunity to sacrifice themselves for their homeland, whereas others will see this transmitted task as an **inherited burden**, difficult to carry and depriving them from any future perspective except the one of return. If their opinions on returning home differ, all do agree on one thing: **the return is uncertain.**

4. Love as a metaphor

4.1. Theoretical introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, the mother is an analogy of the homeland through the uniting concept of motherland. By extension to the mother, the woman is also a symbol of Palestine. It is the beloved one a man is ready to die for. Poets of various poetic styles will use this romantic approach to depict the Palestinians' love for their country and the ardent desire of the exiles to return home.

Once again, the traditional patriarchal system is at the core of our argument. Palestine is like a 'vulnerable woman' who needs protection. Following the Nakba, the hegemonic Palestinian narrative was interwoven in three major themes, according to Ghanim (2009: 23):

- i. Using the lexicon of natural disaster* [Will be explored in the next section].

- ii. *Representing the Palestinian defeat in 1948 through the patriarchal language of “collective shame,” “land rape,” and “honor lost,”* [This narrative has been partially analyzed in the previous section through the exploration of the metaphorical use of ‘*mother*’ and ‘*father*’].
- iii. *Articulating the national liberation project as masculine, promising to liberate the ‘captured land-woman’ and to recover the collective honor of the nation.*

As we will see, Palestinian poetry is filled with symbols of the homeland as a woman, presented interchangeably as a mother, beloved, fiancée, ...

As we saw in the literature review, social identity needs to, above all, be understood as a feeling of belonging to a group considered as superior to the outgroup. There is a need among the members to over emphasize the group’s qualities in comparison to other groups. In the process of social identification, the in-group is glorified. The same logic can be applied to the nationalist feeling. In ‘Imagined Communities’, Anderson (1991: 141) says “*it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The Cultural product products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles*”. Similarly, Kaviraj (2014: 8) argues that “*it is the emergence of the ideal of modern nationalism that produces the strange love of the land that marks modern political discourse, and creates an entirely unprecedented*

connection between fixed political space and a powerful emotion of inhabitation. Poetry invariably plays a critical role in creation of this effect”.

Finally, it is important to highlight that Palestinian women are not only poetry subjects for they are also transmitters and safe-keepers of the homeland’s memory. As suggested by Nimr (2008: 343), *“even before the ‘catastrophe in 1948’, the task of maintaining traditions and the intangible heritage was in their hands. They were the main safe-keepers of folktales, songs, proverbs, and social traditions. In exile, this role was intensified and they made it their responsibility to preserve and pass this heritage to the next generation”.*

4.2. Exploring poetry

If many authors have explored post-Nakba Palestinian poetry on love and the existing feelings of nationalism, it will be argued in this thesis that the use of the woman, the fiancée or beloved as a symbol of the homeland is something that can be found in the Palestinian cultural reservoir well before the Nakba.

We have chosen the most famous Palestinian folktale as a starting point for our analysis: ‘Ataba and Zarif Al-Tool¹⁷’. This centuries-old tale tells the story of a young, handsome, intelligent, polite but poor man, Zarif Al-Tool. One day, our hero met his employer’s (the city’s richest trader) daughter, Ataba. He immediately fell in love with

¹⁷ Reference and translation of this poem was found on Tamim Barghouti’s official website: www.barghouti.com

her. As it frequently happens in such stories, Ataba's father refused to marry his daughter to his poor employee, arguing that he was not able to provide her with the standard of living she was used to. After a long argument, the father decided to offer his beloved daughter Ataba to Zarif on one condition: That he brings the best grapes in the country. The young man told his love about her father's conditions. She told him that she knows he is capable of succeeding and that she will wait for him. He started his journey and decided to not come back alive if he does not find the grapes. When he successfully returned from his long journey with the grapes, the father was very disappointed and decided to send him to a further away city: Yafa. This time, he would have to bring the best oranges. Our hero went back and forth several times and Ataba's father kept on asking for something new each time. He traveled the entire country for years, singing his sadness and unbreakable love for Ataba. People started telling his story, until the king of Egypt finally heard about it and decided to speak to his friend, Ataba's father. He eventually renounced and handed his daughter's hand in marriage to Zarif.

Years later, Palestinians keep on telling Zarif's story and even today, the most famous Palestinian song is inspired from this tale. The song's first verse is very telling¹⁸. It is an imagined dialogue between Ataba and Zarif before he left for his first journey:

O Zarif Al-Tool wait a second; I have to talk to you

You are going on an exilic journey; you better stay in your country

I am afraid if you go, you will become rich in exile

¹⁸ The translation is ours as no official translation was found

You will get close to the kings and will forget about me

The message here is clear, a man should never leave his country. All the money and power in the world is not worth having if it implies departing your homeland. As did Zarif, all true lovers (of Ataba/Palestine) should come back to their beloved/homeland, whatever the difficulties. The return is a right. The love of a Palestinian for his homeland is meant to be as pure as Zarif's love for Ataba. Indeed, he must be ready to make all the necessary sacrifices in order to come back to her, because she is waiting for him. This idea is substantial to the Palestinian ideology, even before the Nakba. Subsequently, Palestinian poets faced with exile have naturally used this lexicon, as it strikes a particular chord in the Palestinian shared cultural reservoir.

The idea that exile separates lovers is an important part of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. In his poem '*Rita and the Rifle*'¹⁹, one of the most famous romantic Arabic poems, he depicts the difficult circumstances surrounding his love with Rita, a Jewish Israeli woman and Darwish's first love. Rita's unattainability echoes the poet's feeling of an impossible return. As for Palestine, he will carry his impossible love for Rita in his heart:

*Between Rita and my eyes there is a rifle
And whoever knows Rita kneels
And prays
To the divinity in those honey-colored eyes.*

¹⁹ The translation is ours as no official translation was found

As discussed in earlier sections, in Mahmoud Darwish poetry, Palestine is personified as the lost beloved. This idea is explicitly stated in his 1973 book, *Diary of a Palestinian Wound*, when he says: “*I am the lover and the land a beloved*” (Nour Al Salem 2014: 44). In his love poems, just like in Zarif and Ataba’s tale, the beloved is a metaphor for his lost homeland. Johnson-Davies argues that Mahmoud Darwish was “*deprived of his beloved and so he must make do with an intricate fabric of dreams and hopes and regrets*” and that his poetry was mainly “*an extended and desperate love affair with his lost homeland*” (Johnson-Davies, as cited in Nour Al-Salem 2014: 45).

Palestine as the beloved, takes ownership of the poetic vocabulary of emotions. As for the lovers, there are no boundaries, no existing distance between the exile and his homeland, for she follows him everywhere. Palestine is present in the poet’s mind and heart and she is by his side, no matter where he is. Abd Al-Latif Aql’s poem “*Love Palestinian-Style*”²⁰ is worth analyzing. In the poem’s first verses, the author gives the impression that he is narrating his love for a woman:

*Of the rubble that was your eyes I erect my home,
I love you alive, I love you in death.
When hungry, I feed on thyme.
I feel your hair against my face and I pine,
My weary face turns red.*

²⁰ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Parmenter 1994)

In the next verses, it appears that the beloved he is referring to is in fact his homeland:

*I am born in the palms of your hands, and embryo,
I grow and grow, and I reach maturity.*

*I drink the meaning of my life from your gaze,
Then my being is awakened and is intoxicated.*

*I journey across frontiers, you are my suitcase,
You are my forged passport.*

Palestine is not only described as the symbolic place of childhood, it is also a source of identity. The poet makes sense of his existence through his belonging to the Palestinian collectivity. Palestine gives his life a meaning. Wherever he goes, Palestine is with him. There is no escaping it, it is thus substantial to any Palestinian. It is not simply portrayed as a socially created political entity; it is inherent, natural and the Palestinian is described as being tremendously attached to his homeland.

*I boast that I can smuggle your eyes
Across borders;
I boast and boast and pride surges within me.*

*And when soldiers confiscate you,
Even before hashish
And gouge the pupils of my eyes,*

I feel I have been cleansed of the shame;

I have become purer

And more immaculate.

In these verses, it seems that this emotional and romantic vision of nationalism on the model of the love that can exist between two lovers, adds a heroic and romantic aspect to the exile's struggle. The exile is proud to say that nothing can hinder him from returning to his beloved homeland. As for lovers, distance intensifies the feeling of attachment. The love of an exile for his homeland is then the purest of all feelings. Being an exile is no longer something to be ashamed of.

When they fear what may be under my armpits,

They confine me in small cells

I sign your name

At the end of police reports.

And even an identity.

And when I am led all alone

To be whipped and humiliated,

And lashed at every police station,

I feel we are lovers, who died from ecstasy,

A dark-skinned man and his woman.

You become me and I become you –

Luscious figs and shelled almonds.

And when soldiers smash my head

And force me to sip the cold of prison

To forget you – I love you even more.

Through exile, the feeling of belonging is strengthened. The exile becomes a weapon and even an identity. The violence of exile, far from diminishing the feeling of belonging to one's homeland, reinforces it. It seems as if the sense of exile has become a necessary component of the poet's identity. Exile is the enemy and key of artistic creation. Darwish's poem 'Who am I, Without Exile?'²¹ is very telling on this matter. In the first verse of the poem he says:

*A stranger on the riverbank, like the river...
Water binds me to your name.
Nothing brings me back from my faraway
To my palm tree: no peace and not war.*

Here the poet depicts himself as a lonely and desperate exile who has lost all hope of ever going back to his beloved homeland. As we saw in previous poems, the poet is free of any geographical limitation; borders and barriers no longer matter for him as he takes his beloved with him everywhere. As did Zarif Al-Tool, the exile carries his beloved homeland with him throughout his journey. In the poem, 'In exodus I love you more', Darwish says:

*My heart is my only country,
And in exodus I love you more.
I empty the soul of the last words:
I love you more.*

²¹ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 16)

In 'Who am I, without Exile?'²², Darwish writes:

*Our weight has become light like our houses in the faraway winds.
We have become two friends of the strange creatures in the cloud,
And we are now loosened from the gravity of identity's land*

The poet in his exilic misery finds himself free of any restrictions. This may refer to both the restrictions imposed by Israeli and the in-group collectively imposed norms²³. There is then a dichotomist and complex relationship between the poet, exile and homeland. The poet suffers from exile, but he also finds relief in the fact that his homeland is within him and impatiently awaiting his return, just like Ataba longed to be reunited with her Zarif. In the same poem, Darwish, speaking to his lost beloved, Palestine, says:

*What will I do without exile, and a long night
There is nothing left of me but you,
And nothing left of you but me.*

The duality between the poet who tries to seek an identity in exile and the poet who lives to return is a major topic in Palestinian poetry. The poet's search for identity is constantly haunted by the idea of being away forever and of dying in exile. We already illustrate this fear with the poem 'To my mother'. Another example of this fear is to be found in a verse of Darwish's poem, 'A letter from Exile'²⁴:

²² Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 16)

²³ See the literature review on collective axiology

²⁴ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 18)

*Will evening remember
A migrant who came here...
But did not return to the nation?
Will night remember
A migrant who died without a shroud?*

Another interesting aspect of Palestinian poetry on love is that it informs us about the way the exiled perceives pictures and imagines his lost homeland. Through the use of the analogy woman/homeland, Palestine is personified and the poet will attribute her human characteristics. Darwish's '*A love of Palestine*'²⁵ is an example of the theme of personification. The poem is a celebration of the beauty of the beloved. He says, in the second movement of his poem: "*Palestinian she was and will always be*". It is clear that the feelings the poet has for his beloved are also, and above all, directed towards his homeland. In a verse, he even describes his beloved:

*Palestinian by eyes and tattoo,
Palestinian by name,
Palestinian by dreams and sorrow,
Palestinian by her kerchief, her feet and her body,
Palestinian by words and silence,
Palestinian by voice,
Palestinian by birth and by death.*

Every little aspect of the person's physical appearance and behavior, despite being the beloved, refers to their Palestinian identity. There is no place for individuality.

²⁵ The poem was found in (Darwich et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation has been found

In her essay, Honaida Ghanim (2009) argues that if Palestinian poetry is overloaded with symbols of the homeland as a woman, presented interchangeably as a mother, a beloved and a fiancée, there are also poems in which the woman is presented as a betrayer, prostitute and unfaithful individual. In order to understand this phenomenon, we must first explore briefly the concept of *‘ird*.

According to Barakatm, as a result of the agricultural modes of production in the villages, Palestinian peasant culture²⁶ is basically organized around two major axes: the axis of land values and the axis of family values. While the first one constitutes the peasant’s imagination and daily life, the second axis constitutes a practical codes of ethics focusing on family honor (*‘ird*) (Barakatm, as cited in Ghanim 2009: 33). According to Dodd (1973), much of the organization of Arabic family can be understood through the concept of *‘ird* understood as a controlling value. Abu-Rabia defines *‘ird* as “*honor surrounding female chastity and self-restraint; it embraces various forms that imply both respect and disdain*” (2011: 34). According to Ghanim (2009), males have a responsibility to conserve *‘ird*, even when the woman is married. This is because the honor of the woman is connected to the honor of the whole collectivity and not only an individual matter. The shame of a lost honor is felt collectively. As we will see, this collectively felt shame is very much the same as the one felt after the Nakba. Therefore, the unfaithful woman will become a metaphor for the lost homeland.

²⁶ In the next section of our analysis we will see how and why the Palestinian poetry was built around the peasant traditional identity.

In his poem ‘*She, the Land*’²⁷, Rashid Hussein presents the story of a man who sold his land to a Zionist in order to pay his fiancée’s dowry. This poem is overloaded with images based on the analogy land/woman. In this poem, we can see how the poet presents the land honor as woman honor that was sexually humiliated when sold (Ghanim 2009: 34):

You sold the braid of the olive tree.

You humiliated the honor of the garden at the market.

You betrayed the love of the garden.

You shattered the nipple of the lemon tree?

Would you shame your mother, who breast-fed you? To cover up my disgrace!

Would the nudist garden be able to cover me with Jasmine?

Mahmoud Darwish also used the image of a beloved woman as a metaphor for a beloved “*homeland who can be an ‘unfaithful betrayer’*” (Ghanim 2009: 34). In his poem ‘*Sadness and Anger*’²⁸, he writes:

Do you love her?

Well, I loved her before you.

Furthermore, I was swinging on her flowing braids.

She was beautiful.

Nevertheless, she danced on my grave.

Darwish’ depiction of the homeland as ‘dancing on the exiles grave’ is an extremely strong statement. According to Ghanim (2009: 34), it is a way for the poet to

²⁷ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Ghanim 2009: 33-34)

²⁸ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Ghanim 2009: 34)

show the “collapse of social values and the impossibility of undoing the damage”, this refers, according to us, to the impossibility of returning to the homeland. In the poet’s mind, the purity of his beloved and sacred homeland was dishonored by strangers, such as in Rashid Hussein’s poem ‘*A refugee and a Pigeon*’²⁹:

*I, my sister remained in Haifa.
Maybe she is serving in a pub.
Maybe she became a rag of disgrace...
Sister, I wish you were not my sister.
Sister, I would be happy if you just die.*

4.3. Conclusion

Exploring the question of nationalism and return through the prism of gender relations gives us various indications on how Palestinians make sense of these socio-political realities. In this section, we can observe how the major collective turmoil that has been the Nakba has been both a source of important identity and value changes, and at the same time, the vector of a certain **continuity in collective thinking**. The social system that used to prevail was a patriarchal one with a clear role division: Women have to preserve their family while men protect the land, source of life. After the Nakba, we have a similar structure but with different avatars. Mothers now need to preserve the memory and men must return to the land.

Thus, questions of identity and return are strongly related to the patriarchal system, which in turn, is deeply related from its ‘masculine perspective’ to the idea of

²⁹ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Ghanim 2009: 35)

honor. Indeed, for a woman needs to preserve her ‘purity’ and her family, whereas the man must protect his land and family. All these elements are considered as honorable. In a sense, the Nakba is a question of lost honor. We must highlight the fact that in the Arab World, the question of honor is among the most important notions and is therefore highly emotional. Besides, Palestinians face a moral imperative to return and liberate the “**captured land**” in order to **recover the collective honor** of their Nation.

From a ‘feminine perspective’, the issues of exile and return are related to the idea of **purity** (‘ird). Derived from the notion of ‘pure woman’ and ‘pure love’ of a patriarchal society, is the idea that the love of a Palestinian for his homeland is as pure as the love he is supposed to have for a woman. Similarly, the right of return is as pure as the one of folktale lovers. In order to achieve this highly pure task, a Palestinian should be ready for any necessary **sacrifice**.

As the French Writer Honoré de Balzac (1837) said: “*Love knows no distance*”. The romantic and ‘pure’ approach of national belonging and return, based on the model of love stories, implies in people’s collective thinking that there are **no possible boundaries** between the exile and his homeland. There is a strong idea that nothing can possibly stop exiles from returning home. The exile and his lost homeland are ‘inseparable’.

Exile and return become part of the Palestinian identity. Indeed, there is the idea that no identity is possible outside of Palestine. Wherever he may go, even after several generations, the exiled person is and will remain Palestinian. He is still part of the group and the **country is waiting** for him. His return is only a matter of time. The same narrative has been used by neighboring Arab countries to justify the fact that exiled people should remain exiled. There is the idea that if they become part of another group, they shall betray Palestine.

Palestinians in exile find themselves in a **dilemma**; they have no civil or political identity, which means no rights. They are not even allowed to ask for one as it will represent an indirect betrayal. The only perspective left is to return to their homeland. Faced with this difficult situation, a new generation has some new ideas, and even in some isolated cases, certain **doubts**: Maybe exile is a way for Palestinians to free themselves from the collective pressure of a nation facing the **collapse of its social values**. And, perhaps the damages that have been done are impossible to undo and the return is impossible...

5. Nature as a metaphor

5.1. Theoretical introduction

When dealing with collective identity transmission and nationalism, territorial issues are fundamental. Billig (1995) claims that there is no gap between people and their country, in other words between nationals and their national homeland. Maine goes as far as to argue that “*England was once the country in which Englishmen lived. Englishmen are now the people who inhabit England*” (Maine, as cited in Etherington 2003: 40). We can then argue that the feeling of belonging to a territory is a source of national identity. Exploring the way in which a nation perceives, describes and understands their land is crucial to understand the members’ collective identity.

According to Yahya and al. (2012: 76), resistance poets in the Arab world have used their environment “*in terms of nature and its various aspects such as the rocks, the stones, the sun, the sea, the birds, and the hills and so on to express their deep outburst of resistance*”. Undoubtedly, among all Arab lands, Palestine did always have an exceptional and unique attractive and fascinating nature that has “*enthralled the hearts and minds of all the Arab poets*” (Yahya, Lazim, et Vengadasamy 2012: 78).

As we saw in the first section on bloodlines as a metaphor, referring to the natural aspect of things, it adds a touch of superior legitimacy. Defining the relationship between a national and his homeland as natural contradicts Anderson’s vision of the nation as an

'*imagined community*' (1991). In this vision, what links people to their homeland is beyond a political identity: It is a substantial, intrinsic relationship.

5.2. Exploring poetry

In 1996, Raja Al-naqash, an Arab writer and critic, noted that "*Palestine has a unique natural beauty and there is a famous poem on nature by the Arab poet Ali Mahamoud Taha which cannot be traced in any other place in the Arab world except in that of Palestine*" (Taha, as cited in Yahya, Lazim, et Vengadasamy 2012: 78). The poem he is referring to starts with the following words:

Do not say a green land here

Here is a green stone too

This verse means that even a Palestinian stone is worth more than any other stone. In Palestine, a stone is green and productive. Palestine's unique nature has inspired poets, notably Darwish, who utilized nature as a form of resistance in his poetry. Nature is a central metaphor and power from which Darwish uses images and symbols that evoke what Yahya and all (2012) refer to as *eco-resistance*. In his poem, '*A lover of Palestine*'³⁰, the poet uses the analogy beloved/homeland we explored in the previous section. We made a selection of verses from the poem in which he uses various natural features to describe his love for his beloved homeland:

³⁰ The poem was found in (Darwish et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation has been found

*Your eyes are a thorn in my heart;
Your voice is gone from my home as a bird;
You are the fire and the water;*

...

Darwish's poetry holds various references to nature. We have decided to focus our research on two of them: The bird and the tree.

5.2.1. The bird

In Palestinian poetry, nature not only reminds the poet of his lost homeland through images of his childhood environment, but also constitutes an interlocutor. Nature is the link between an exile and his lost homeland. In his poem, '*The Lake of Olives*'³¹, Yusuf Al-khatib sends a flock of birds to his village with a message expressing just how much he suffers from exile:

*Our village, we dispatched to you flocks of birds
I tell them; if you draw near to our village's river
Stay a few hours, and tell the house of our grief*

The bird is a fundamental metaphor when studying the way Palestinian poets speak of exile and the return. In his poem, '*Flowers of Blood*'³², Darwish is speaking to his lost homeland and says:

³¹ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Lovatt 2010: 11)

³² The poem was found in (Darwish et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation has been found

*My heart was once a blue bird... and you, my love, its nest.
And your handkerchiefs close to me, all white... once o my love.*

Here, the poet refers to his own exile. The homeland is represented as a nest and the exile is the bird. We have already seen this image in the poem ‘*To my Mother*’ where he described the return of the exile to his homeland in these words:

*Give me back the star maps of childhood
So that I
Along with the swallows
Can chart the path
Back to your waiting nest.*

In his poem ‘*Travel Permit*’³³, the poet uses the same analogy of birds/exiled people:

*Birds, all of them spread across my hand
In front of the airport’s doors, far away...*

The poet positions himself as a guide for the lost refugees waiting for the long journey back home. As for bloodlines, the comparison with nature elements gives the impression of a natural, inherent relationship between the exile and his homeland. The return is naturally spontaneous. According to Mahasneh (2010: 3), Darwish typically uses “*simple vocabulary and clear images from the Palestinian land and nature to show the strong bonds between the Palestinian people and their homeland*” in his poetry.

³³ The poem was found in (Darwich et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation has been found

The poet uses the image of the bird's migration. Just like birds, the exile flees war but always come back. The return is more than a right; it is a natural imperative. The return of refugees to their homes is no longer a political issue for it is a question of nature. In his poem, '*The Pigeon Fly*'³⁴, Darwish uses this reference for the bird's migration. He wants to show in this poem that there is always a return after migration and that it is only a matter of time. In the poem's first verse, he says:

*The pigeon fly,
The pigeon come down...
Prepare a place for me to rest.*

Then, the birds leave their place for some time and then come back. This symbolizes the resistance of Palestinian refugees who have been forced to leave their homeland but will, like birds, eventually come back. If birds have the ability to move from one land to the other, the exile does not have the same mobility.

The bird becomes a symbol of freedom, an ideal for the exiles. According to Nour Al Salem (2014: 43), "*freedom in Darwish's poetry is often expressed via the metaphor of birds that possess the freedom he is denied to visit the beloved homeland. The poet, being unable to travel and express himself freely, is a bird detained in a cage*". His admiration for the birds' freedom is expressed in his poem '*The Hoopoe*'³⁵,

³⁴ Translation of this poem was found on www.poemhunter.com

³⁵ Reference and translation of this poem has been found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 44)

*You birds of plain and valley, fly!
Fly swiftly toward my wings, toward my voice!
People are birds unable to fly, O hoopoe of Words.*

By using the metaphor of the free birds, the poet urges his fellow Palestinians to take the path back home. In ‘*A Metaphor*’³⁶ he writes:

*You think you are higher than yourself,
Like a bird existing only in a metaphor.
The metaphor entices you to break away
From it and look at the empty sky,*

If the bird is a metaphor of freedom, it can also symbolize the victims of siege. In his poem, ‘*The Canary*’³⁷, Darwish compares the Palestinians under siege in the West Bank as birds trapped in a cage:

*We listened to the canary’s words to me and you:
‘Singing in a cage is possible and so is happiness’.*

5.2.2. The tree

According to Mahasneh (2010: 37), “*Darwish refers to the land of Palestine with its trees and plants extensively in his poems*”. It is a way for him to express his emotions toward his homeland. He evokes the beauty of Palestine’s nature, and by doing so, he creates a powerful bond with his homeland. It is also a way for the poet to express the strong connection of Palestinians to the land and take root in the homeland.

³⁶ Reference and translation of this poem has been found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 44)

³⁷ Reference and translation of this poem has been found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 44)

Deeb (2000: 155) argues that “*Darwish mentions different types of trees and plants which grow in Palestine like cypress, pines almond, olive trees, palm, fig trees, lemon and orange trees, thyme, lily, willow, and wheat to emphasis his deep rooted existence there and his bonds with land*”. In his poem, ‘*The Cypress broke*’³⁸, he writes:

*The cypress broke like a minaret,
And slept on the road upon its chapped
Shadow, dark, green,
As it has always been*

The cypress tree is used here as a symbol of Palestine’s strength and resistance. Comparing the cypress with a minaret shows just how important this tree is in Palestinian culture. The reference to religion is a classic of Darwish’s poetry that we will explore in the next and last section of our analytical chapter. Considering the importance in the Islamic tradition of the minaret as a religious symbol of elevation, when the cypress breaks, this means there is a serious problem in Palestine. However, even broken, the cypress remains unchanged, dark and green, like it always was. The poet simply wishes to prove that whatever happens in Palestine, his homeland will remain strong (Mahasneh 2010: 38).

Among all trees, the olive tree has a unique importance as it is a symbol of the strong bond between Palestinians and their homeland. As the olive tree is known to be a century old tree, referring to it is a way for the poet to assert the fact that Palestinians are

³⁸ Reference and translation of this poem has been found on (Mahasneh 2010: 37)

deeply rooted in their country. Through the image of an olive tree, the poet will reflect on the real collective memory of Palestinians. Poets of all generations will focus on the Palestinian peasant identity. As we saw in the section on the father as a metaphor, the peasant is perceived as a strong relation of love with his land. The colonizer will never be able to have this relationship for the peasant is a simple man with no relation to political questions whatsoever. In his very famous poem, '*Identity Card*'³⁹, Darwish describes what is, according to him, the Palestinian identity:

Write down!
I am an Arab
Employed with fellow workers at a quarry
I have eight children
I get them bread
garments and books
from the rocks...
I do not supplicate charity at your doors
Nor do I belittle myself at the footsteps of your chamber
So will you be angry?

In his view, a real Palestinian only depends on his own community and land. He works hard to feed his children. He found his dignity and survival in his land. His identity is deeply ingrained in his land. He depicts the Palestinian collective identity as deeply embedded in Palestinian land. They are intrinsically and quasi organically linked to their

³⁹ Translation of this poem was found on barghouti.com, the official website of the Palestinian poet Tamim Barghouti

homeland. There has never been a life for Palestinian people outside of their country and there will never be one according to the poet:

Write down!
I am an Arab
I have a name without title
Patient in a country
Where people are enraged
My roots
Were entrenched before the birth of time
And before the opening of the eras
Before the pines, and the olive trees
And before the grass grew

The olive tree is used as proof and a symbol of Palestine's long lasting history. Through these images, the poet reminds the Palestinians that there is no life outside Palestine. The underlying idea is that a Palestinian does not need any material possession to return to his homeland, as Darwish puts it in the poem of the same name, '*On this Land, there is what is worth living*'. The tree is therefore a sign of hope, possibility and a realistic return. According to Ben Zid, in Darwish's poem, '*Victims of a Map*'⁴⁰, he "*adopts a series of promises that determine his will to transcend the atrocity of injustice and see the blood of his compatriots fused with nature to give birth to an olive tree as an emblem of a new hope*":

⁴⁰ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Ben Zid 2014: 57)

We will write our names with scarlet steam
We will cut off the hand of the song to be finished by our flesh
We will die here, here in the last passage. Here and here our blood will plant its olive tree.

In Palestinian poetry, there is this idea that Palestinians must return to protect their land which only they can take care of. Their land is described as devastated by the occupiers. In the poem, ‘*Do not sleep, my love*’⁴¹, he says:

A branch of an olive tree crying
In the exiles on the rock
Searching for its roots
And for the sun and the rain

In some poems, such as in ‘*Those who pass between fleeting words*’⁴², the poet not only calls for a return but also to evict the invader from his homeland. In the poem, Palestinians have the words to take back their lost country and protect it as only they can. Only they know the real value of their beloved homeland and are willing to die to return to it:

And we have what you lack: a bleeding homeland of a bleeding people
A homeland fit for oblivion or memory
O those who pass between fleeting words
It is time for you to be gone
Live wherever you like, but do not live among us

⁴¹ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 40)

⁴² Translation of this poem was found on www.merip.org, the Middle East Research and Information Project website

*It is time for you to be gone
Die wherever you like, but do not die among us
For we have work to do in our land*

5.3. Conclusion

The relationship between Palestinians and their homeland goes beyond a political identity; it is a '**natural**' relationship. Similarly, the exiled person is linked to his country by nature. Thus, the relationship between men and their country is rooted in the **iconic figure of the Palestinian peasant**. Following the same reflection, the return is also described as natural, spontaneous and therefore inevitable.

The reference to nature is used in various ways and for different objectives:

- i. To affirm, prove and reinforce the idea that Palestinians are deeply rooted in the land of Palestine; they have a **long-lasting history of inhabiting Palestine**. This aspect of the narrative is also very important as part of the Israeli discourse. To legitimate their rights on the land, the Israeli narrative was to say that they have a long history in the country or that Palestinians have no existence as a community in the land. It is interesting to remember how Israelis themselves used the same theme of nature (e.g. the Kibbutz peasant) to legitimize their position in the eyes of the international public.

There is a strong **cultural contestation** going on regarding the question of land.

- ii. To affirm that there is a **unique and ‘reciprocal’ relationship** between Palestinians and the land derived from the Palestinian peasant history is something that the Israeli from Europe and other places in the world cannot understand.
- iii. Subsequently, the land is **devastated**, scarred by the presence of people who do not know how to treat it properly. Images of Israeli deforestation and destruction of the sacred Palestinian peasant life have strongly accentuated this idea. The land is suffering and a true Palestinian should be ready to sacrifice himself to return and protect his homeland.

6. Mythology and Religion as metaphors

6.1. Theoretical introduction

In this last section of our analysis, we will examine the use of two of the most prominent metaphors of religion and mythology in Mahmoud Darwish’s poetry. First we will study his use of references from the three major Abrahamic religions. Then, we will explore the poet’s use of mythological symbols such as the siege of Troy or Ulysses’ myth.

As seen during the exploration of the previous metaphors such as the mother, love and nature, Darwish tries to retrieve the memory of an entire nation, where a new culture 'replaced' another deeply rooted one. He wishes to explain and address the long presence of Palestinians on their home soil: Palestine. In order to do this, he refers to artefacts, legends, folktales and myths that dominate the past (Nour Al Salem 2014: 137).

According to Mansson (2003: 109), in Darwish's poetry, myths are used as "*a way to find lost family and friends and to reconnect to the past*". He adds that the poet "*has the capacity as well as the responsibility to connect the past and the present*" (Mansson, as cited in Nour Al Salem 2014: 137).

6.2. Exploring poetry

6.2.1. The Abrahamic Religions

According to Hamzah, Darwish includes different types of external intertextuality such as the religious and heritage references (Hamzah, as cited in Mahasneh 2013: 70). According to Mahasneh (2013: 70), the religious allusions in Mahmoud Darwish's poetry "*include different references from the Holy Qur'an like the story of prophet Suleiman and Queen Saba', prophet Noah's story, Adam's story when Allah taught him the names of all creatures, and the story of Sodom and how the Israeli people killed their prophets*".

The first biblical figure worth exploring in Darwish's poetry is Joseph. In '*I am Yusuf oh father*'⁴³, Darwish addresses the question of expulsion, exile and oppression through the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) with his brothers as stated in the Quran:

I am Yusuf, O father

O father, my brothers do not love me nor want me among them

They assault me and throw stones and words at me

They want me to die so they can eulogize me

They closed the door of your home and left me outside

They expelled me from the field

They poisoned my vineyards

They destroyed my toys, O father

In this poem, Yusuf refers to his father to complain of his brothers' hatred. They are the cause of Yusuf's pain and suffering and attempt to silence and kill him. These brothers can represent both the Israelis (Al-Areqi 2014; Yousef and Aseel Abu Al-Rub 2016) and the other Arab countries who sold Palestine like Yusuf was sold by his brothers as argued by Raheb (2014). The second explanation makes more sense, as in Yusuf's story, the Prophet's suffering is mainly due to the fact that he has been betrayed by the closest people to him: His brothers. We can even imagine that Darwish was referring to the Palestinian bourgeoisie who, according to many of his poems, is partly responsible for the exiles' misery. Advocates of the 'Israelis explanation' focus on sentences such as '*the closed the door of your home and left me outside*' or '*the expelled*

⁴³ Reference and translation of this poem was found in (Al-Areqi 2014: 33-34)

me from the field'. Anyhow, the poem obviously compares the faith of the exile to the one of the Prophet Joseph.

In this poem, Darwish describes the exiled Palestinians as weak and helpless by comparing them to an innocent boy who is playing with a toy destroyed by the enemy. According to Al Areqi (2014: 34), “*the appealing words of Yusuf are the appealing words of Palestinians who could not find any power to bring back their rights in an era that does not recognize the language of weakness*”. In Quranic tradition, Joseph was sold as a slave, spent around seven years in jail on false accusations and later lived in Egypt. Joseph lived as an exile, far away from his homeland. As did Joseph, an exile longs to return to their country and take back what belongs to them.

Among the various biblical metaphors Darwish uses in his poetry is Noah whose journey on the ark is taken as a metaphor for the undesired exile endured by Palestinians. However, as for Noah, the exile is a survival issue. While the ark relates to exile, the roots, tree and mother, as we saw in the previous section, all represent the beloved homeland and the bird (here a dove) represents the return. In the poem ‘*Rain*’⁴⁴, he says:

Noah!
Give me the branch of an olive tree
And my mother... a dove
We made a paradise
Whose ends are litter boxes

⁴⁴ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 42)

Oh, Noah!
Don't travel with us
Death here is victory
We are roots, can't live without earth.

Here, Darwish makes it clear that for him, Palestinians cannot live anywhere else but in Palestine, the return is thus a necessity for them: '*We are roots, can't live without earth*'. For him, Palestine is a lost paradise. This idea is typical of Darwish's work. For him, there has been two lost paradises: One for whole Humanity when Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise and the second when Palestinians were expelled from their Eden, Palestine. In the poem, '*The Adam of two Edens*'⁴⁵, he writes:

I am the Adam of two Edens lost to me twice:
Expel me slowly. Kill me slowly
Under my olive tree
With Lorca.

Finally, Darwish used the Prophet Mohammad as a metaphor for exile. The migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina, the Hijra, is taken as a metaphor of the Palestinian exilic experience (Nour Al Salem 2014). In Islamic history, the Prophet Mohammad is known to have suffered imprisonment in his native city of Mecca and witnessed his people's expulsion. Palestinians have suffered the same imprisonment and

⁴⁵ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 43)

the same exilic journey. In the poem, ‘*A Song for Men*’⁴⁶, in an imaginary dialogue with the prophet, he says:

I want Mohammad the Arab

Yes! Who are you?

A prisoner in my country

Without earth

They have thrown my people in exile

They have come to buy the fire from my voice

So that I may depart from the shadows of prison...

6.2.2. Mythology

According to Akash, “*Darwish views myth as an imaginative space for our deepest emotional experiences and consequently uses the dimension of myth as a field to indicate life’s unlimited possibilities*” (Akash, as cited in Nour Al Salem 2014: 38). A prominent example of Darwish’s use of myth in his poetry is the poem ‘*The phases of Anat*’⁴⁷. The poem refers to Anat, a major northwest Semitic goddess. For Palestinians, she is the moon goddess, an ancient and beloved Canaan’s deity. She is also known as the queen of heaven and earth who passes through the gates of death and finally gives up all she has to be reborn. She is the symbol of death and the power of rebirth. She is known to have been to the underworld to look for her lover Baal. In the myth of Baal’s death and resurrection, she is known as the one who “*mourned and searched for him and finally helped to retrieve him from the netherworld*” (Nour Al Salem 2014: 138).

⁴⁶ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Nour Al Salem 2014: 36)

⁴⁷ Reference and translation of this poem was found on www.questia.com

As for Zarif Al-Tool and Ataba, we have the story of a person who undergo a long and difficult journey to find his lover. We will argue that Anath in Darwish's poetry symbolizes the exile in his journey back to the beloved, his homeland.

O Anat, why remain in the underworld?

Come back to nature!

Come back to us!

Wells dried up when you left us,

Streams and rivers ran dry when you died,

Tears evaporated from clay jars,

Air cracked like wooden embers

From dryness,

And we broke down over your absence

Like fences rotting away.

We find in this extract, a summary of the ideas we found in the previous sections. The relationship between the exile and his homeland is presented as a story of love and sacrifice. The lovers have been separated and the homeland is now searching for its lost people. In the absence of its beloved people, the country is suffering, its nature is dying, it feels lost, empty, rotting and even sullied.

But Semitic divinities are not Darwish's only mythological references. The poet is also known to draw his inspiration from Greek mythology. In the coming pages, we will explore two metaphorical references, namely Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. It will give us

the opportunity to show how Darwish's poetry mixes different metaphors. We will also see how he uses the father and woman metaphors in a mythological context.

In the poem, '*My father*'⁴⁸, we already explored, he wrote:

And then the horizon starts singing:

"Ulysses was a knight..."

My father once said:

"The one who has no homeland

Has no grave in the moist earth..."

He forbade me to leave and take on a journey!

In these verses, the father advises his son never to leave his homeland. He relies on the myth of Ulysses (also known as Odysseus). The Palestinian father is a strong hero, as was the hero of the Greek myth; he went on a long journey and endured many challenges in order to return back to his homeland. Both the Palestinian father and Ulysses show determination by holding on to their homeland and their dream of return. The mythic exilic journey of Ulysses is deeply rooted in the Palestinian collective memory. When analyzing Palestinian literature, some observers like Barbara Harlow, go as far as to see in "*the departure of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Fedayeen from Beirut, following the 1982, Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the summer-long siege of that city, the image of Odysseus who leaves after the Trojan war to go on a long journey of*

⁴⁸ The poem was found in (Darwich et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation has been found

moving from one city to another” (Harlow, as cited in Yousef et Abu Al-Rub 2016: 292). Harlow is right to mention the siege of Troy as it is indeed an important reference in the work of Mahmoud Darwish.

In his poem, ‘*Male Anthem*’⁴⁹, Darwish says in a verse called ‘The Trojan girls’ song’:

Farewell nights of purity
O walls of Troy!
From our ruins we go out
For the wedding of the conqueror
So that we can dance on the brave Trojans who are dead
Captives, we will give them our virginity
With all they want
- They are strong –
And we will sleep with those who fought against the heroes of Troy
Farewell O nights of purity and dreams!
O memories of our friends!
Captives, that is what we are from now on
Caught between the remains of Troy!

As we saw in the second section of our analysis, homeland in Palestinian poetry is often presented as an unfaithful woman whose honor was “*sexually humiliated*” (Ghanim 2009: 34). Here, the rape of Trojan women symbolizes a collectively felt humiliation. For

⁴⁹ The poem was found in (Darwish et Carré 2009), and the translation is ours as no official translation has been found

Darwish, Palestinians were left astray the day they lost their homeland. Those who died in Palestine while fighting are heroes, and on the contrary, those who stayed but did not fight, dishonored their nation. The poet, by presenting the fall of Palestine as an act of ‘rape’, creates a feeling of collective shame. According to Ghanim, Arab poets tend to act like “*agents of cultural preservation and reproduction by turning national defeat into ‘collective family honor loss’*”.

When dealing with the trauma of the Nakba and its consequences, Darwish frequently uses the dichotomy between an unfaithful woman, symbol of the collective shame, and the epic Homeric hero as a symbol of the courage and determination of Palestinian people. This second category can be represented by both a hero who shall fight to his death to protect his city (Trojan) or a hero who faces all the challenges in order to return to his homeland (Odysseus).

An example of the unfaithful woman is in Darwish’s poem ‘*Sadness and Anger*’⁵⁰:

Do you love her?

Well, I loved her before you.

Furthermore, I was swinging on her flowing braids.

She was beautiful.

Nevertheless, she danced on my grave.

⁵⁰ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Ghanim 2009: 34)

And an example of the epic hero is the poem ‘*Counterpoint for Edward W. Said*’⁵¹ he dedicated to his friend, Professor Said:

*He was the last hero in that epic,
Defending the rights of Troy
To share the story*

Darwish presents Said as a brave hero who is struggling in the name of vanquished people, the Palestinians.

However, Palestinian reality is far from a Homeric myth and the poet knows it. In ‘*State of Siege*’⁵², Darwish tells Homer, in an imaginary dialogue, that Palestine’s fate will be much different than the one in Greece:

*No Homeric echoes for anything ...
Only a digging up of a comatose state
Under the ruins of an encroaching Troy*

As it happened with Troy, Palestine will be destroyed, but no epic story will be written about it. Writing poetry is thus an absolute act of resistance. He perpetuates the Palestinian memory, and the imperative of return. According to Behar (2011: 190), “*Darwish sense that if the sons of this future Troy do not write their narrative, they will disappear from history and will only be known through the history of the victors: through the Homer appointed by the Israelis*”.

⁵¹ Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Behar 2011: 190)

⁵² Reference and translation of this poem was found on (Behar 2011: 190)

6.3. Conclusion

The exiled individual is portrayed as weak and helpless. During exile, his life will never be as good as the one he had in his homeland. In contrast with the hard life in exile, the **homeland is magnified**. It is an Eden, a lost paradise. In exile, Palestinians have no identity, although he used to be an honest worker who was very much respected in his own country.

The **dichotomy** is clear, there is on one side the **humiliation of exile**, a life of suffering without honor, and on the other side a heroic resistance to return. The return is a necessity, an honor and an act of heroism. This struggle for the homeland gives a whole generation a reason to go on. Those who have lost their honor shall lead a **heroic life** whereas for those who live in refugee camps, they shall somehow find their way back to a similar Eden. The homeland is sanctified and the return perceived as a **holy mission**. For a whole community, the return is a chance for **salvation**.

This being said, the return is full of obstacles. This difficult and long-lasting task implies many sacrifices. But the Palestinian is utterly convinced by the idea that the return is not a personal struggle but more of a collective mission for the greater **common good**. A whole Nation is waiting to go back to its sacred, beloved and paradisiacal homeland.

CONCLUSION

This study endeavored to answer the following research question: How are the concepts of 'Homeland', 'Exile' and 'Return' presented and how have they evolved in Palestinian poetry during the 20th century? In order to answer this question, our research started by presenting background literature on the theories of group dynamics and collective memory mechanisms.

The concept of social identity was first brought to light. It was the occasion for us to explore both intragroup and intergroup dynamics. When it comes to in-group mechanisms, we see how and why people feel the need to identify themselves with a group that they consider as superior. Seen this way, the group is a source of self-esteem and offers its members a set of values that they have to respect in order to be an official member. Simultaneously, members of the group will differentiate themselves from the out-group. Through complex mechanisms of social comparison between group members, boundaries will be naturally created. Indeed, not only will it have to be decided on who is allowed in the group and what is tolerated as 'in-group behavior', but it will also be necessary to define ourselves in comparison to others: 'We are what the others are not'. Ultimately, social identity contributes to a phenomenon of social categorization structured around a 'us against them' perspective.

Our exploration of Palestinian poetry shows different patterns. First, it seems that in the case of Palestinians' understanding of exile and the return, the focus is set more on the in-group relationships rather than on the out-group. Indeed, Palestinians seem to make sense of their experiences primarily through the cultural norms of their in-group. We can thus think of values such as honor, abnegation, love, and so forth.

The way Palestinians think of their identity is deeply rooted in their in-group dynamics and structures. Among the most influential elements of the Palestinian collective ideology is the patriarchal system, intergenerational dynamics, gender relations and social in-group divisions such as the one between peasants and the elite.

As our critic of the social identity theory suggested, a large part of a population ideology can be explained by the in-group complex and evolving dynamics. It seems to us that the theory we have been exploring tends to focus more on the 'us against them' approach. If it is clear that the conflict between Israeli and Palestinians is at the core of the exile and return question, but it seems to us that in the panel of poems that we have selected, this question is presented more as an 'internal issue'.

Similarly, as stated in the literature review, the social identity theories do not focus on the multiplicity of different experiences within a group. Rather, it describes groups as uniform in their ideology. Our exploration of the poetry shows that there are in-group debates on the question of identity and return. The way a group makes sense of his

history and of his future is not as monolithic as the theories we have explored tend to present. Differences exist between different generations, people of different sex, of different backgrounds, etc.

Our literature review also focused on memory mechanisms. Groups have a cultural reservoir they share and transmit from one generation to another. This means collective memories, trauma, but also a collective way of interpreting them. The idea of a unique, collective and exclusive way of interpreting the past, the present and future. The group offers, if not imposes, a grid of interpretation that has to be followed by all members. This cultural reservoir has its own codes, themes and vocabulary. All these elements are transmitted through cultural vehicles. The main vehicle of transmission when it comes to Palestinian society is poetry. If Palestinians have a profound respect for their poets, one stands out as a leading figure, not only in Palestine but also in the Arab World: Mahmoud Darwish. Focusing on one author was a way to ensure a coherence throughout the research. However, in order to stay coherent with our research question, we had to keep on focusing on the poetry's evolution. Subsequently, we decided to use Darwish as a guideline rather than exclusively studying his poetry and make frequent references to other previous and later poetry. As a result, our analysis was subdivided into four different sections, each one exploring a specific theme of Mahmoud Darwish's and other authors' poetry. These themes are bloodlines, love, nature, mythology and religion.

In the first section we saw how the questions of exile and return are influenced by a strong feeling of nostalgia and abnegation towards the homeland. The exiled person in his will to return is often depicted in a sacrificial logic. Exile represents a humiliation that requires a reaction. Men have to return given their role as protectors. However, for the new generation, the question is a lot more complex. If for a majority of Palestinians born in exile, the return is still a necessity, many see it as a burden; there is the idea that the young generation has to pay for their parents' 'weakness'.

In the second section, we saw how the issues of nationalism, exile and return are embedded in the traditional Palestinian family structure, where the men are the land and the family's protectors, whereas the mothers need to preserve and transmit the values and memory. These values include purity and honor. The relationship between members of the group and the homeland are 'gendered' and based on the traditional relationship between men and women in the Arab World. As it is a man's honor to defend his wife, it is his duty to defend his homeland. Similarly, as a woman needs to be 'pure', in other words, faithful and loyal to one man, the homeland is waiting for its only people. Because of this pure relationship, no distance and limit can stand between a Palestinian and his homeland.

In the third section we highlighted the fact that what links Palestinians to their homeland is beyond political identity, it is described as a natural and organic relation. The relationship is made sacrosanct with, at its core, the emblematic figure of the

Palestinian peasant. Palestinians have a long history in Palestine and the return to this beloved homeland is inevitable. This notion is increased by the Palestinian idea that only they are able to protect their suffering land as only they can understand it.

In the final section of our analysis we saw how the exiles feel excluded and weak. Their only chance for salvation is the return to the lost paradise: Their homeland. The homeland's image is idealized and the return described as the solution to the problems of a whole suffering nation. For the good of the whole community, a real Palestinian must, just like mythological heroes, be ready to overcome the various obstacles on the long and difficult way back to the idyllic homeland.

Throughout his poetical work, Mahmoud Darwish shows a very complex understanding of the actual meaning of the Palestinian identity, exile and return as well as the kind of struggle that is needed for Palestinians to overcome the difficulties they face.

Inherent to Darwish's work and personal experience is the idea that Palestinians belong to the land of Palestine. Palestine is at the core of their identity and it gives Palestinians a '*raison d'être*'. In exile, Palestinians are in a paradoxical state of being and nonbeing. As opposed to this vision, in the Zionist narrative, they are presented as leading a nomadic primitive existence. This narrative obliterates the Palestinians' relation to the land (Abdel Karim 2012). The first act of resistance to make is to reassert the bond between Palestinians and their land. The loss of land, the exile and Zionist narrative

represent for Darwish, a threat to the continuity of the Palestinians as a collectivity. We think that this ‘threat’ is the main source of the Palestinian nationalism. In Darwish’s work, the Palestinian present experience is a constant and tortured reminder of the exilic condition; people have nowhere to live, no place to go to and do not belong to any nation. We consider that for Darwish, there is no place to return to, as for him, Palestine, as he knows it, is dead. It is the land of a glorious past.

The Palestinian answer to the Israeli negation of their identity and their right to return to their homeland has then, according to Darwish, to take the form of a ‘memorial struggle’. Palestinians have to protect their memory. In this context, an active historical memory, as the one we find in his poetry, acquires a political function. This does not mean that Palestinians only have to lament for their lost paradise. Passive nostalgia and static mourning brings only paralysis to the national struggle. On the contrary, remembrance and words have to be weapons against the will to silence the Palestinian collective memory. Nostalgia has to be channeled in a collective struggle.

As a result of this research, we can propose at least one recommendation. More than an actual recommendation, it is the central idea of this thesis. In order to understand a complex issue such as the right of return in Palestinian culture, one must abandon the essentialist perspective too often used when dealing with this type of issue. We should understand the complexity of collective thinking and the various cultural specificities of a

given group. The desire to be attentive to specific contextual complexities in theorizing a group's behavior has been the fundamental drive throughout this study.

We have been able to see that the idea of return is deeply rooted in the Palestinian collective memory in highly emotional terms such as honor, purity or abnegation. It is far more important for Palestinians than just a simple political or economic issue. It is a collective issue that links all Palestinians together, beyond any gender or generational consideration. We have also been able to show that there are inter-group discussions going on in terms of return and memory transmission. While some see it as an inherited burden, others consider it as a sacred mission, an honor and a chance to live a heroic life.

Palestinian poetry is of great value when trying to make sense of the Palestinian approach to political issues. During the process of poetry exploration and analysis, our conviction that the poet has, within the Palestinian community, an important responsibility in sharing and interpreting the collective memory and history, was strengthened. The importance of poetry in consolidating and celebrating a specific narrative on nationalism and return, has resulted in a specific way of looking and making sense of diasporic people, their faith and their hypothetical return. The case of Mahmoud Darwish has proven particularly applicable to our research, given his significant and various works on the question of exile and return. Along with other Palestinian poets, he has been considerably engaged in poetry as a means of narrating the experience of exile,

memory, nostalgia, collective identity and the dream of returning to one's beloved homeland.

Mahmoud Darwish provided us with an exceptionally large and pertinent body of work for the evaluation of the Palestinian understanding of exile and return. It goes without saying that exploring other poets, other poems, or simply other metaphors, could have provided us with a deeper understanding of the studied issue. Our research comforts us in the idea that further exploration of the Palestinian poetry can increase our understanding of this long-lasting conflict far from reaching a conclusion. If anything, then, this thesis attempted, through the systematic exploration of one of the Palestinians' various avenues of collective expression, to add to the comprehension of Palestinians' complex identity and by subsequently to the better comprehension of a too long and deadly conflict.

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BIOGRAPHY

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