

FINAL VERSIONS AND MEANING TRANSFORMATION: THE EXAMPLE OF MAḤMUD DARWĪSH

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ABSTRACT: *It is usual for a poetic text to undergo changes between the draft and the print versions. But Maḥmūd Darwīsh continued changing his poems even after they were in print, out of a desire to further refine his poetic output. I shall therefore treat a former edition of a poem as a draft of the later edition. In fact, Darwīsh not only made changes of this kind using a variety of techniques; he also made changes in the text that was recited orally before an audience. I have thus treated the recited versions as an "illegitimate final text", since there are reasons why he made such changes. In a number of printed texts he also used the technique of exclusion, both in collections and in single poems. The question that I address in this context is the following: What are the relationships and dialectics between the various different types of modifications that Darwīsh made in his texts and the formulation of meaning as a message that the poet wishes to convey to the receiver?*

KEYWORDS: Maḥmud Darwīsh, Final versions, Draft, Meaning Transformation, Modern Arabic Poetry.

INTRODUCTION

A draft is a text which has not yet been legitimized by the author. That is so because the hypothetical choices in the conscious and subconscious aspects of creative writing impose a kind of uncertainty until at a certain moment the text takes on its final form to the author's satisfaction. Its transformation into a printed and published form can give it this legitimacy, since it turns the draft into a *fait accompli*. Such a definitive act is required since otherwise the author would continue to modify his writings in an unending series of drafts. The writer's decision to finish off his work involves a particular choice to the exclusion of others. The version chosen by the author is the one through which he or she tries to convey the text's final meaning to the reader, despite the fact that the relationship between the writer and language testifies to the latter's inability to express fully what he wants, and despite his attempt to provide the reader with the final and definitive meaning.¹

As for the number of different choices which the writer creates for his completed text, that is, the number and type of drafts of his literary text, that depends on the depth of thought produced by the writer's consciousness.² For only rarely does a draft text as such become the final definitive version. Every text is a process of semantic and structural transformations for the purpose of attaining a meaning with which the author is satisfied and which will make the reader share it. This is because any text is a changeable system, containing data that make it

¹ Taha 2004:161.

² Ibid., 159.

unstable and multifaceted.³ The reader's role in meaning creation⁴ begins at the moment of reception: "Speech achieves meaning only beginning at the moment when it is received, perceived and its code broken. Many are those who break the code, and many are the meanings derived therefrom".⁵

Ibrāhīm Ṭaha classifies the tangled thoughts as they take form in the author's draft according to three criteria:

1. Self referring, dealing with the "interrelations between draft/s and a writer";
2. Internal referring, involving the "interrelations between draft/s and a last (final?) text);
3. External referring, involving the "interrelations between draft/s and a reader".⁶

In the present study we use examples from Darwīsh's poetry in which he made deletions or insertions, or changed the order.⁷ The reader should note that we are not referring here to drafts which the poet wrote in his own hand but to texts printed in the journal *al-Jadīd*, especially in the early part of Darwīsh's poetic career, when he still lived in Israel, until 1970. In other words, I shall treat the versions published in that journal as drafts of the text eventually published in his definitive collections. The poet made changes in his texts in succeeding editions. Such changes, which the poet himself made, show that the preceding editions, although printed, may be viewed as drafts. Another kind of change that I will discuss here was introduced by the poet into oral poems or what can be called Darwīsh's "oratorical texts", aimed at an audience's ears. These changes will be discussed in answer to the question: "What does the change add to the poetic text?".

Ḥātim al-Ṣakr, however, rejects this view:

The poet hides behind terminology in his attempts to find all manner of excuses for his control over his text and for demonstrating that it is his possession. This is the case, for example, with "final versions", which are an attempt to give the poet the right to revise a text that he or she had written fifty years earlier. This "revision" (involving deletions, additions and modifications) reflects the poet's sense of absolute despotic ownership and can lead to a falsification of his consciousness, since it projects his feelings on a version of

³ Ibid., 167.

⁴ By "meaning" we mean: "the uttered topic, the performance and the language as it is used in context, the speaking self and the hearer or receiver, in other words, it is an interconnection between notification, comprehension and interpretation". Al-Kaylānī:2002:28.

⁵ See Rāy, 1987:184.

⁶ Ibid., 167-168.

⁷ Ḥādī al-Uṣṭa noted some of these changes without elaborating on them in his article "The Poet and Versions of His Text" (in Arabic), where he says: "It is worth noting, as part of the perusal of Darwīsh's texts written at various times, that in his "Complete Works" and in his collections he left out complete poems or groups of poems that had previously been published in newspapers or magazines, that he replaced words with others and deleted entire lines or stanzas, and that he reformulated some poems so that their second version appears completely different from the first, although a connection remains. Here I will ignore publishers of some of Darwīsh's books who removed some of his poems from them, for whatever reason, for example Yaḥyā Hījāzī, who republished Darwīsh's prose book *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuẓn al-ʿādī* (*Diary of the Usual Sadness*). The two editions of the book are perhaps worthy of a study, to determine what the [second] publisher left out and why. Here I will also ignore those poems and collections that the poet did not put into his *Complete Works*, since I chose to entitle my work as *The Poet and the Versions of His Text*. See al-Uṣṭa 2003:55-74.

an experience that has gone, and at the end of the day restricts the meanings recorded in the text before it was modified.⁸

He goes on to state that

the text is a reading covenant which the poet should not rewrite it at will, while the reader does have the right to create a second reading after having assimilated the text intellectually and emotionally. A poet may experience a desire to reconnect with his poems, but that does not give him permission to 'fabricate' a new connection [...] with the excuse of 'final versions' and 'projected awareness'".⁹

One reason why the published text in this case is treated as a draft is that Darwīsh usually left no trace of the drafts that he wrote: "I rewrite. Many of my critic friends would like to lay their hands on my drafts. But I tell them not to bother, for I do not leave any. I continually rewrite and do not leave a draft".¹⁰

Darwīsh describes the effect of making these changes as follows:

"I first write a line and then the poem flows. That is how I write. When I make changes in it, or it makes changes in itself, it becomes a different poem. Many of my critic friends try to get hold of drafts of my poems but I tell them that I destroy them right away because there are secrets and things I am not proud of, and because sometimes there is no connection at all between the first and the last version. A change in one line of a poem can change its entire structure, so that it is now subject to a new and modified structure".¹¹

Before we go into an analysis of these changes, we shall present the poet's view on the matter as it was reflected in interviews that he gave. The issue first emerged in the mid-1980s, especially after the Palestinian exodus from Beirut in 1982, when Darwīsh began to introspect on his esthetic and personal output ever more. I will assume in advance that the changes which Darwīsh made were not limited to esthetics but occasionally also involved political considerations as well as his contact with his readership, as the present study will show. Still, it is the esthetic dimension which was the predominant consideration in Darwīsh's reformulations of his poetry since the beginning. This is also confirmed by many interviews that he gave, in which he presented his views on the composition of poetry. In one of his presentations of his collection *The End of the Night* (1967) he stated:

My latest collection is *The End of the Night* (*Ākhir al-layl*). I feel that I have no need to introduce it to you since it has been extensively disseminated throughout the Arab world. However, I feel that in their artistic evolution there is a greater distance between that collection and *A Lover from Palestine* (*Āshiq min Filastīn*) than between the latter and *Leaves of Olives* (*Awraq al-zaytūn*). I feel that the words of *The End of the Night* are more contrastive and more evocative, that my symbolism has become richer and denser, even though the overall atmosphere is translucent. I think I was able to create a friendship between dream and reality, between the symbol's cause and its meaning, as well as the

⁸ Al-Šakr, 1994:267.

⁹ Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁰ Wāzin, 2006:83.

¹¹ Ibid.

spontaneity of the relation between thought and sentiment. In the harsh dialogue or conflict between death and life I overcame death without making my ideology intervene overtly. But *The End of the Night*, which I consider my best work, was received with clear indifference by most of the readers in our country. Dozens of intellectuals said to me: "Maḥmūd, go backwards. If this is artistic progress, then it would have been better if you had not progressed". I was told in solicitude: "It would have been better if you had not left the village. This poetry is incomprehensible".¹²

This early view on Darwīsh's desire to develop his esthetic project may help us understand his penchant for deletion.

Temporal exclusion constitutes yet another element in Darwīsh's operation of poetic revision:

This, too, is my control over my text. I write it and hide it for months in the drawer. Then I return to it and if I find in it any likeness to me I consider myself as having done nothing. But if I feel as if someone else wrote it in my place, if I read it and it is like a different poem, then I feel that I have done something.¹³

Darwīsh thus seems aware of his own methodical acts of revision in his poetry, for he writes every text at least twice. The poet's approach allows us to treat the changes which he introduces into his poetry as part of a project whereby Darwīsh tries to achieve a "true" poem. Darwīsh suffers from a real apprehension which drives his persistent desire to revise his poetic works:

I do not read my poetry to myself. I do not read it at all, so I do not know what I have written. But I re-read every poetry collection dozens of times before it is published and I revise it dozens of times, until I feel that it is ripe for publication. After a collection is published I emancipate myself from it completely and it becomes the property of others, the property of critics and readers.¹⁴

But Darwīsh made changes also to his printed books, thus removing the completed text's "inviolability". The printed text becomes a draft in a sense, something which Darwīsh condones from a purely esthetic perspective:

I only have the right to make changes to the extent that these are possible, that is, changes to some sentences or in some paragraphs, or deletion of some lines, from esthetic considerations and no others. Had I been given the opportunity I would have constantly revised my writings, but had I been given the opportunity I would also have erased perhaps more than half of my works.¹⁵

Darwīsh revised his poems more than others. He is also one of the few poets who expressed their views on this issue so constantly and clearly. Deletions are such a fundamental aspect of his finished works that they cannot be ignored. He performed deletions of every kind, even removing an entire published poem collection, *Wingless Birds* (*ʿAṣāfir bilā ajniḥa*; 1960), from his *Collected Works*, for esthetic reasons,¹⁶ among them the obvious imitations it

¹² Darwīsh, 1969:19-27.

¹³ Bayḍūn, 1995:106.

¹⁴ Wāzin, 2006:71.

¹⁵ Wāzin, 2004:64.

¹⁶ Ḥannā Ibrāhīm criticizes this collection as follows: "Although there may be some blemishes in the collection, they do not touch the essence. The poet can remove them in time; thus one drawback is the poet's ardent desire

contains and the underdevelopment of some of its themes. He also removed some single poems that had been published previously, for example "Passing by in Passing Speech" ("Ābirūn fī kalām 'ābir; 1988),¹⁷ "Muḥammad" (2003) and "The Well-Measured Speeches of the Dictator" ("Khuṭab al-diktātūr al-mawzūna"; 1997). But Darwīsh himself expressed doubts concerning the trustworthiness of his deletions:

I did not publish everything I have written in book form. Some of my writings were published in the press and some have not been published at all. I deleted my entire first poetry collection and do not recognize it. It was published in Palestine in my youth. It contained personal adolescent poems. I hope to continue to delete. That is the critical issue. Even in my present stage I have written several poems that I did not put in any of my poetry collections. I published them in the press but did not include them in my books. A poet has the right to remove any of his poetry that he wishes, but the question is: Is his opinion correct or not? After all, there's the reader's opinion as well.¹⁸

Drafts and meaning transformations: Analysis of examples

In this study we describe the changes which Darwīsh made in the poems he published in the journal *al-Jadīd* in the years 1960-1970. We analyze the various types of changes, whether in the title, whether they involve the deletion or addition of a single word, a whole line or an entire stanza. We then attempt to answer the following question: How did these revisions affect the poetic text's esthetics and was this the only consideration in his acts of deletion or revision? We shall also compare Darwīsh's published poems with the versions that he recited to audiences and show the motivations for the changes that he wrought in the oral presentations.

For ease of treatment and comparison the poems will be dealt with in the chronological order in which Darwīsh's poetry collections were published. The poems from *al-Jadīd* will be chosen accordingly and the two will be compared using the criteria noted above.

If we compare the poem "ID Card" ("Biṭāqat hawiyya"), published in the collection *Leaves of Olives* (1964)¹⁹ and in *al-Jadīd*²⁰ we find that the poet made a number of changes in the version published in the collection. Thus in the version that appeared in *al-Jadīd* he writes:

Yu'allimunī shumūkh al-naḥs

Qabla qirā'at al-kutub

He teaches me the soul's pride

Before reading books!

While in the collection the text reads:

to create new expressions and images, which sometimes turn out successful and sometimes not". See: Ḥannā Ibrāhīm, "On the Collection *Wingless Birds*", *al-Jadīd*, issue 1, January 1961, p. 52. As part of his criticism of Darwīsh's love poems he remarks: "But we must not censure the poet for his suspicious preoccupation with eroticism. His youth is his excuse". Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁷ See Bayḍūn 1995:91-92.

¹⁸ Wāzin 2006:65.

¹⁹ Here I use the *Complete Works*, vol. 1, Dār al-ʿawda, Beirut, 1989.

²⁰ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "ID Card", *al-Jadīd*, issue 3, 1963, p. 9.

Yuʿallimunī shumūkh al-shams

Qabla qirāʾat al-kutub

He teaches me the sun's pride

Before reading books!²¹

Clearly the poet in the version that appears in the collection replaced the direct referral to pride with the image of the sun in order to enhance the meaning, since the sun evokes the ideas of height, warmth, life and the ability to remain distinct from others, something which the phrase "the soul's pride" is unable to express.

Elsewhere in the text that appeared in *al-Jadīd* he says:

Sajjil

Anā ʿArabī

Wa-lawn al-shaʿr faḥmī

Wa-lawn al-ʿayn ... qamḥī

Write down:

I am an Arab

My hair is coal-colored

And my eye is wheat-colored.²²

In the version of the poem in the collection the color of the eye becomes brown (bunnī or 'coffee-colored'). In our opinion the poet would have done better if he had retained "wheat-colored", with its associations with the soil, with plenty, with optimism. This has been lost in the version published in the collection, where the color word is semantically more restricted. At the end of this stanza the poet says, in the version of *al-Jadīd*:

Wa-kaffi ṣaliba kal-ṣakhr ...

Wa-aṭyab mā uḥibbu min al-ṭaʿām

Al-Zayt wal-zaʿtar.

My hand is hard as a rock ...

The food I love best is

Oil and hyssop.²³

²¹ Darwīsh, 1989:75.

²² Darwīsh, 1963:9.

²³ Ibid.

In the collection the poet removed the lines "The food I love best is / Oil and hyssop", which added unessential detail to the general description that he gives to those who disapprove of his identity. Similarly we find in the *al-Jadīd* version:

Wa-^ʿunwānī: anā min qarya ^ʿazlā^ʿ mansiyya
 Shawārī^ʿuhā bilā asmā^ʿ
 Wa-kull rijālihā fī al-ḥaql wal-maḥjar
 Yuḥibbūn al-shuyū^ʿiyya
 Fa-hal tagḥḍab?
 My address: I am from a defenseless forgotten village
 Whose streets have no name
 All of whose men are in the field and the quarry
 They love communism
 Does that make you angry?²⁴

In the collection version Darwīsh removed the phrase "My address" because of its excessive directness, and the line "They love communism",²⁵ perhaps because Darwīsh wished to focus on the poem's esthetics and not to restrict it to the time period during which he belonged to the Party, and also because after he left Israel in 1970 he perhaps wanted to free his text from its chronological origins, since in the second stage of his career he adopted nationalist views, following his direct encounter with the Arab world, especially Egypt. His ideological shift may also have contributed to this change. In this context the question arises of whether a text should be true to the moment in which it was created, or does the poet retain ownership of the text and possess the right to constantly revise it as long as he lives? The latter certainly was true of Darwīsh, who continued to regard the text as his own until the day he died.

The poem "A Letter from the Diaspora (memoirs of a young refugee to his mother)" ("Risāla min al-manfā [min mudhakkirāt lāji^ʿ shābb ilā ummihi]")²⁶ was published in *Leaves of Olives* without the introductory explanation in brackets, which the poet removed in order to give the poem a more generalized meaning.²⁷

In the first stanza, which goes as follows,

Taḥiyya .. wa-qubla fī al-khadd
 Wa-laysa ^ʿindī mā aqūlu ba^ʿd
 Min ayna abtadī..?

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Al-Uṣṭa believes that the reason for the deletion was "perhaps due to a request by the publisher ^ʿAlī Sa^ʿīd Maḥmadiyya, the owner of Dār al-^ʿAwda, in order to make it possible to disseminate the collection in certain Arab countries, especially the oil-producing states in the Gulf". Al-Uṣṭa, 1996:8.

²⁶ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Letter from the Diaspora", *al-Jadīd*, issue 10, 1963, pp. 5-7.

²⁷ Darwīsh, 1989:33.

Wa-ayna antahī?

Greetings, and a kiss on the cheek

I have nothing to say yet

From where should I begin

And where should I end?²⁸

In the collection Darwīsh removed the word "cheek", either in order to undo the rhyme or because kisses in a non-romantic context are given on the face in any case, and there is thus no need to specify the location more explicitly.

In the second stanza we read: "Aqūlu lil-ʿuṣfūr .. in hājarta ʿindahā yā ṭayr" ("I say to the bird, if you emigrate to it oh bird"). In the collection the second part of the line is "in ṣādaftahā yā ṭair" (if you encounter it oh bird").²⁹ The poet rejects the idea that emigration is an act of volition; rather, he sees it as rooted in doubt and chance. In this way Darwīsh reflects his own psychological state in exile.

In the third stanza we read:

Wa-qāla ṣāhibī:

Hal ʿindakum raghīf?

Aḥussu annī jāʿi?

Hal ʿindakum raghīf?

My friend said:

Do you have some bread?

I feel that I am famished

Do you have some bread?³⁰

Darwīsh removed the third and fourth lines of the preceding stanza, which he considers an unnecessary interpolation.

Darwīsh changed the title of the poem "al-Muʾmin" ("The Believer")³¹ when it appeared in the collection *A Lover from Palestine* to "Shahīd al-ughniya" ("Martyr of the Song"), thus changing the meaning so that it was no longer free-roaming but linked to the Palestinian reality that he described, and that he put in a positive light through the word "song".

In the second stanza he wrote:

Yā anta!

²⁸ Darwīsh, 1964:5.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

³⁰ Darwīsh, 1963:6.

³¹ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "The Believer", *al-Jadīd*, issue 1, 1965, p. 41.

Qāla - 'awā' waḥsh –
Uṭṭika darbaka law sajadta
Amāma kahfī sajdātayn
Wa-lathamta kaffi – fī ḥayā' - marratayn
Aw .. taṭalī khashab al-ṣalīb
Shahīd ughniya wa-shams!
Oh you!
He said – the howl of a wild beast –
I will give you your path if you bow
Twice before my cave
And struck my hand – bashfully – twice
Or .. ascend the wood of the cross
A martyr to a song and the sun!³²

In the collection³³ Darwīsh changed the word "'awā'" ("howl") to "nibāḥ" ("bark"), perhaps because barking is more appropriate to the sense of entreaty and begging in the context of this stanza. He also deleted the conjunction "or".

In the line "Wal-ismiki fī famī al-mablūl bil-ṣaṭsh al-muṣaffar bil-ghubār" ("And to your name in my mouth moist with thirst sprinkled with dust" the word "mablūl" ("moist") was changed to "maghmūṣ" ("immersed"), perhaps because the meaning of the latter word has a greater impact.

The poet ends with the words "Anā ltaqaytu ma'a al-radā" ("I encountered destruction").³⁴ In the collection the poet changed the verb to "tashahhaytu" ("desired"), that is, he replaced a verb with a neutral meaning with one that denotes desire and craving.

In the poem "Uhdīhā ghazālan" ("I Give Her a Gazelle")³⁵ the author adds a paratext to the title: "Ilā ukhtī al-ṣaghīra wa-atrābiḥā" ("To my little sister and her peers"). This dedication is missing in the collection.³⁶ He also removed the postscript in the poem "Tammūz 1965 sijn Ma'asiyāhū" ("July 1965 Ma'asiyahu Prison").³⁷ The poet in these cases seems to try to detach the poems from their historical setting.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Darwīsh, 1989:104.

³⁵ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Uhdīhā ghazālan", *al-Jadīd*, issue 7-8, 1967, p. 22.

³⁶ Darwīsh, 1989:100.

³⁷ Darwīsh, 1965:23.

In the first stanza of the poem "Abī" ("My Father")³⁸ we read:

Ghaḍḍa ṭarafan ʿan al-qamar
Wa-nḥanā yaḥfun al-turāb
He disregarded the moon
And bent over to scoop up a handful of soil.

In the collection the verb "yaḥfun" ("scoop up") has been replaced by "yaḥḍun" ("embrace"),³⁹ which implies a stronger physical and mental attachment to the soil.

In the second stanza the poet says:

Kāna fīhā Abī
Yurabbī al-hijārā
Min qadīm .. wa-yaʿbud al-aṭyārā
In it my father used
To raise stones
From times of old, and worship omens.⁴⁰

In the collection the phrase "wa-yaʿbudu al-aṭyārā" ("and worship omens") becomes "wa-yakhliq al-ashjārā" ("and create trees").⁴¹ Here the poet transformed the weak, humble worshipping father into a powerful creator, thus transforming the meaning of the stanza from negative to positive power.

In the same stanza the poet changes the verb in "Qultu: Yā nās! Ikfiru" ("I said: People, disbelieve!")⁴² to "nakfiru" ("we will disbelieve"), turning this line into an inciting call in which the poet and the collective become one.

In the collection *Ākhir al-layl* (*The End of the Night*; 1967, Dār al-Jalīl, Acre) we find passages that were later revised in the *Collected Works*. The first edition may thus be considered a draft.

In the first edition there is a prologue to the poem "Taḥṭa al-shabābīk al-qadīma" ("Under the Old Windows") which is absent in the *Collected Works*:⁴³

Wa-idhā kuntu ughannī lil-farah
Khalf ajfān al-ʿuyūn al-khāʿifa
Fa-līʿanna al-ʿāṣifa

³⁸ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Abī", *al-Jadīd*, issue 2, 1966, p. 25.

³⁹ Darwīsh, 1989:144.

⁴⁰ Darwīsh, 19665.

⁴¹ Darwīsh, 1989:145.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 167.

Waʿadatnī bi-nabīdh

Wa-bi-aqwās qazaḥ.

If I sing in joy

Behind my fearful eyelids

It is because the storm

Promised me wine

And a rainbow.⁴⁴

This passage is taken from the poem "Jawāz safar" ("Passport") in the same collection. The prologue's optimism fits the meaning of the collection's title, *The End of the Night*, which alludes to liberation and deliverance.

The title of the poem "Lā tanāmī" ("Do Not Sleep")⁴⁵ was changed in the *Collected Works* into "Lā tanāmī ḥabībatī" ("Do Not Sleep My Dear")⁴⁶, thus restricting the meaning to his beloved. In the second stanza we read:

Lā tanāmī ḥabībatī

Jarḥunā ṣāra awsimā

Ṣāra nāran ʿalā qamar.

Do not sleep my dear

Our wound has become medals

Has become fire on a moon.⁴⁷

In the *Collected Works* the last phrase becomes "wardan fī qamar" ("a rose on a moon"),⁴⁸ which is more in keeping with the context of medals, as a ritual in which the wound is an icon of Palestinian suffering.

In the poem "Jabīn wa-ghaḍāb" ("Forehead and Rage") the poet writes:

Waṭanī! Yā ayyuhā al-nisr

Alladhī yaghmidu minqār al-lahab

Fī ʿuyūnī

ʿAbra quḍbān al-khashab.

My homeland! O eagle

⁴⁴ Darwīsh, 1967:5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁶ Darwīsh, 1989:187.

⁴⁷ Darwīsh, 1967:37.

⁴⁸ Darwīsh, 1989:187.

That plunges its flaming beak

Into my eyes

Through wooden rods.⁴⁹

In the *Collected Works* the last line is replaced with "Ayna tārīkh al-ʿarab" ("Where is the Arabs' history").⁵⁰ Here the poet changes the original local flavor (prison: "wooden rods") into a more general context, that of the heroic history of the Arabs, with a censorious question that shows off the contradiction with the actual situation described by the poet.

In the poem "Jawāz safar" ("Passport") we read:

Kull al-manādīl allatī luwwiḥat

Kull al-ʿuyūn al-sūd

Kull al-ʿuyūn

Kānat maʿī, lākinnahum

Qad asqaṭūhā min jawāz al-safar.

All the handkerchiefs that were waved

All the black eyes

All the eyes

Were with me, but they

Dropped them from the passport.⁵¹

The line "All the black eyes" is missing in the collection *Ḥabībātī tanḥaḍ min nawmihā* (1970).⁵² The reason is that the poet wished to avoid too specific a reference, for which he uses the device of anaphora, here represented by the repeated occurrences of the word "all". Rather, he wished to give the poem a more general nature.

There is another type of revision which Darwīsh carries out in order to avoid his texts being interpreted superficially. This can be seen, for example, in the poem "Anā wāḥid min mulūk al-nihāya" ("I Am One of the Kings of the End") in the collection *Aḥada ʿashara kawkaban* (*Eleven Planets*; 1992), where we read:

Lam akun ʿāshiqan kay aṣḍuq anna al-miyāh marāyā,

Mithlamā qultu lil-aṣḍiqāʾ al-quḍāmā, wa-lā ḥubb yashfaʿ li

Mudh qabiltu "muʿāhadat al-ṣulḥ" lam yabqā lī ḥaḍīr.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁰ Darwīsh, 1989:233.

⁵¹ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Jawāz safar", *al-Jadīd*, issue 11, 1968, p. 10.

⁵² Darwīsh, 1989:356.

I was not a lover in order to believe that water is a mirror

As I said to my old friends. No love will intercede for me

Since I accepted the "peace treaty" I have no present any more.⁵³

In the *Complete Works* Darwīsh changed "peace treaty" into "perdition treaty".⁵⁴ And in the same collection, in the poem "Lil-ḥaqīqa wajhāni wal-thalj aswad" ("Truth Has Two Faces and the Snow Is Black") we read:

Man sa-yunzil a^ṣlāmanā, naḥnu am hum? Wa-man

Sawfa yatlū ^ṣalaynā "mu^ṣāhadat al-ṣulḥ", yā malik al-iḥtiḍār?

Who will take down our flags? We or they? And who

Will recite the "peace treaty" to us, oh king of death?⁵⁵

Darwīsh changed "mu^ṣāhadat al-ṣulḥ" ("peace treaty") here into "mu^ṣāhadat al-ya^ṣs" ("treaty of despair") in the *Complete Works*.⁵⁶

Al-Uṣṭa explains this revision as the intellectual giving in to political considerations: "In this way the intellectual yields to politics".⁵⁷ Indeed, he claims that the changes Darwīsh made in his poetry occurred as part of the relationship between politician and intellectual:

Anyone who observes the relationship between the intellectual and the politician will come to the following conclusion: This relationship will be one of reconciliation as long as the intellectual and the politician proceed together in thought and deed. If they have a disagreement the intellectual must choose among the following solutions: Either he stands up to the politician, in which case he risks repression, imprisonment or even death; or he gives in, in which case he lets his cultural identity be dissolved into his political self through frequent repetition of the discourse of the latter, which does not believe him; or he manages to remain in a state in which he is capable of reconciliation with both, in which case the intellectual cannot express his views openly but must maneuver, wear a mask behind which he can hide; or he can live in exile and become reconciled only to himself, in which case he may face situations that are even harsher than remaining in the homeland, such as alienation, solitude or silence.⁵⁸

Another type of change was made by the poet when he recited his works. This type of change in our view had the aim of maintaining communication with his audience. Recital involves a kind of balance between a collective project and an oratorical communication. Here we shall discuss two examples of this kind, the first from his recording of the poem "Madīḥ al-ẓill al-^ṣālī" ("Panegyric to the Tall Shadow"; 1983):

Allāhu akbar

⁵³ Darwīsh, 1993:15.

⁵⁴ Darwīsh, 1994: 482.

⁵⁵ Darwīsh, 1993:19; see al-Uṣṭa, 1997:73.

⁵⁶ Darwīsh, 1994:485.

⁵⁷ Al-Uṣṭa, 1997:72. "The man speaks here about three types of changes which the poet made: Esthetic, political and religious. In this case it is the second type, even if such a statement may do the poet an injustice".

⁵⁸ Al-Uṣṭa, 1997:80.

Hādhihi, āyātunā, fa-qraʾ

Bi-smi al-fidāʾī alladhī khalaqā

Min jarḥihi ufuqan".

God is great,

These are our verses, so recite

In the name of him who sacrificed himself, who created

A horizon from his wounds.⁵⁹

But when the poet recited this work he changed the last line into "min jazma ufuqan" ("a horizon from a pair of shoes"). This change may be due to religious considerations, as al-Uṣṭa points out, since here the poet alludes intertextually to the Quranic verse "Iqraʾ bismi rabbika lladhī khalaqa" ("Recite in the name of your Lord who created").⁶⁰ The poet puts the martyr on the same level as God if we accept the connection between his text and the Quranic verse. This rebellious attitude reflects his emotional state after the Palestinian exodus from Beirut.

The second example is taken from the poem "Saʾqṭaʿ hādhā al-ṭarīq" ("I Shall Travel the Road") in the collection *Ward Aqall* (*Fewer Roses*; 1986). The poem ends as follows:

Taḍīqu binā al-arḍ aw lā taḍīq. Sa-naqṭaʿ hādhā al-ṭarīq alṭawīl

Ilā ākhir al-qaws. Fal-tatawattar khuṭānā sihāman. Akunnā hunā mundhu waqt qalīl

Wa-ʿammā qalīl sa-nablugh sahm al-bidāya? Dārat binā al-rīḥ dārat, fa-mādhā taqūl?

Aqūl: Sa-aqṭaʿ al-ṭarīq al-ṭawīl ilā ākhirī ... wa-ilā ākhirihī.

Whether the land is too confined for us or not, we shall travel this long road

To the end of the bow. Let our steps be arrows from the bow's string. Were we here a short time ago

And in a little while we shall reach the arrow of beginning? The wind circled around us. What do you say?

I say: I will travel this long road to my end ... and its end.⁶¹

In the recital he adds the following line at the end:

Wa-armi kathīran min al-ward fī al-nahr qabla al-wuṣūl ilā warda fī al-jalīl.

And I shall cast many roses in the river before coming to a rose in Galilee.⁶²

⁵⁹ Darwīsh, 1994:19-20; see al-Uṣṭa, 1997:72.

⁶⁰ Q 96:1.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 323.

⁶² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WViRbJul0Ng&feature=related>

This addition clearly aims at connecting the poem's message overtly to the audience. In this way Darwīsh finds the right balance between the written text, which is free from any specific historical context, and the recited text, which may be said to constitute a kind of umbilical cord between himself and the audience, so that the hair-thin connection that lasted for half a century was not severed.

This passage shows once again that, as we pointed out before, Darwīsh takes care to maintain a constant relation between his oral poetry and his public.

This reflects Darwīsh's view on the balance between the esthetic and the political. Darwīsh himself has this to say on the relationship between the two:

I am always perplexed when I have to decide what to choose [to recite]. I want first of all to satisfy my poetic soul, but I also want to satisfy the poetic taste of the public and some of the demands of this atmosphere. So I choose what to recite at the last moment. However, in the latest poetry evening at the Muḥammad V Theater I chose to recite a number of passages on the state of siege, because I felt that the audience demanded, without making it explicit, that I say something about the situation in my country, especially in light of the fact that the state of siege in Palestine is continuous, whether, military, political, economic or cultural. So I began to recite these passages in order to declare my poetic identity, which lies outside the bounds of nationalism but rather swims in a wider human space.⁶³

Darwīsh provides the following concise view on the equation between esthetics and national commitment: "A judicious and experienced poet is able to find a balance between his moral and his esthetic duties".⁶⁴

The last collection of his poetry, *Lā urīdu li-hādhihi al-qaṣīda an tantahiya* (*I Do Not Want This Poem to End*; 2009) aroused a great deal of controversy concerning the meter in some of the lines. The reason for this was that parts of the collection were still in the process of being edited by the poet before his death:

Darwīsh used to say to us that he would never leave a text or a letter uncompleted and that scholars did not have to exert themselves, since they would not find anything. But unfortunately, despite all his efforts Maḥmūd did leave us these poems. For this reason I was so perplexed when I encountered them. Would it be right to publish them? And if we do not, then what should we do with them? Yet another question presented itself very

⁶³ Abd al-Ṣamad b. Sharīf, <http://www.al-kalimah.com/Data/2008/9/1/BinSharif-Interview.xml>. Darwīsh has also expressed his views on the relationship between his text and the reader: "Q. As part of your poetic endeavor you wager on an inner reader who goes beyond the tangible tendency towards the enthusiastic and the oratorical towards something that is more profound, in the sense that you provide him with ample scope for observation. Does this mean that you are more agreeable than before? A. Fortunately my readers have become accustomed to the fact that I do not repeat something that I have already recited in the past, nor do I repeat my old zealous or direct poetic inclination, or whatever other characteristic that no longer fits in with the esthetics of my poetry. Even more fortunately, I have won my readers' trust and they are satisfied with the new things that I present to them. In fact, they expect me to present them with new things rather than repeat old recitals or the poems that they loved. This trust which was given to me by my readers has permitted me to develop my poetic devices and to evolve my poetry's esthetics. My readers are therefore among my critics who helped me evolve, while I, too, helped the readers to liberate themselves from their poetic tastes and to adopt one that is more sublime, one in which the relationship between the esthetic and the human was more in line with direct or political-oratorical poetry". Ibid.

⁶⁴ Muḥammad Shaʿīr, "Ḥiwār maʿa Maḥmūd Darwīsh" ("An Interview with Maḥmūd Darwīsh"), *Akhbār al-adab*, 29.12.2002, p. 16.

forcefully: Are we permitted not to publish them? Should we then leave them in the poet's archive and let them be published haphazardly or broken up by the scholars who would administer what we found of Darwīsh's archive as they wished? Naturally, no one has the right to destroy any piece of paper. Only the poet himself has that right. Therefore it was eventually decided to publish it in its entirety without exception.⁶⁵

Numerous articles have been written on this issue.⁶⁶ Dīma al-Shukr published a number of drafts of poems by Darwīsh. She notes that "drafts are a workshop of talent. They contain some corrections and also extensive signs for the "concern" that Darwīsh imprinted with his branding iron. For he is the discontented poet who is dissatisfied with his output, who took great care that no rhythm slip away".⁶⁷

Al-Shukr thus reinforces the conclusion reached in the present study, that Darwīsh from the very beginning was focused basically on the esthetics of his work.

CONCLUSION

We conclude that Maḥmūd Darwīsh attached considerable importance to esthetics in his poetic forms and that although he took care to maintain a balance between his national commitment and his esthetics, it was the latter that predominated in his poetic oeuvre from the very beginning, as shown both by his own explicit statements and by what the present study has demonstrated.

The changes or revisions which Darwīsh made to his poetry were of a number of different types: Changes in the title, adding a paratext, replacement of words, rearrangement of lines, additions and deletions, all of which he used profusely until the 1970s, especially in the poems which he published in the journal *al-Jadīd* during this period. Only a few of the changes were made due to political or religious considerations. As exemplified by the revision and refinement which he introduced into many of his poems throughout his career, for example in the famous poem "ʿĀbirūna fī kalām ʿābir" ("Passing by in Passing Speech"), the poem "Muḥammad" (about the killing of the child Muḥammad al-Dura), and in the poem "Khuṭab al-diktātūr al-muwāzina" ("The Well-Measured Speeches of the Dictator"), these revisions can be interpreted as an expression of Darwīsh's desire to prevent his poetic output from being a poetry of reaction. With respect to the third type of revision, consisting of

⁶⁵ Khūrī, 2009:21.

⁶⁶ Al-Shukr, <http://www.daralhayat.com/print/45308>.

⁶⁷ "A live example of this can be found in the poem 'Nasītu li-ansāki' ('I Forgot to Forget You' with its unique form, consisting of five similar stanzas, each of four lines that rhyme with 'r' without a following vowel, followed by a line that has brackets and a different rhyme, with 'l' and no following vowel. The latter line plays a major role in providing the poem with a faint second voice through which the meanings emanating from the first four lines are intensified and enriched with a more sublime metaphor. This is what happens in all the stanzas, with the exception of the bracketed line in the last stanza, in which Darwīsh writes "Ḥādīr khayma ... wa-ghadī manzilu" ("My present is a tent ... and my future a home"), in which the poem's general meter (*al-mutaqārib*) and rhyme scheme are retained. Perhaps because the meaning of this line ready-made or perhaps abstruse because of its esthetic overuse, Darwīsh decided to replace it with "Ḥādīr ghayma ... wa-ghadī maṭaru" ("My present is a cloud ... and my future rain". This shows that his revisions are due solely to semantic rather than metric considerations, for the second meaning is not only more precise but also fits in better with the second stage in [his] writing, when Darwīsh, his own first critic, was aware of this point". See: al-Shukr, "Kayfa yuṣaḥḥih Maḥmūd Darwīsh nafsahu bi-nafsihi" ("How Darwīsh Corrects Himself by Himself"), *al-Ḥayāt* (London), 7.8.2007.

adding, deleting or changing the text in the case of oral recitation, the study has shown that the main motivation for these changes was to please the patriotic feelings of his audience. In second place came Darwīsh's desire to recite experimental poems in which he focused on esthetics. It was the act of recitation that created the poet's connection with the public. Darwīsh took care to nurture this connection, because it prepared the way for him to move on to new esthetic experiments each time.

My reading of the changes which Darwīsh made was not definitive, but rather hypothetical, since in some cases different changes were made in different readings. In other words, the readings of a text were never something final, since further changes could have been made in future readings. This was a poet who may have wanted to turn his drafts into a final finished edition, but made further changes to that edition, so that the previous one became a draft in the broad sense of the word. Whether printed in a journal, or as part of a collection, or recital, the text was not final.

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