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**Mahmoud Darwish as a Sonneteer:
Employing Western Poetic Form in Modern Arabic Poetry**

A B S T R A C T

Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008) was one of the most notable Palestinian and Arab poets who contributed significantly to modern Arabic poetry's theme and style development. This paper aims to explore Darwish's experimentation in the sonnet form in his Sareer al Gharibeh [The Stranger's Bed] (1999) and how he innovated the western form to serve his eastern themes. The paper briefly traces the historical development of the sonnet form. The sonnet was a famous poetic form that had swept the whole European continent since the early 13th century, yet it found its significant place in modern Arabic poetry only late in the 20th century. The paper traces the roots of this famous form, which goes back to the Arabic poetic form, the muwashshah, which was prominent during the reign of the Andalusian rulers during the 10th century. The paper elucidates how Darwish's sonatas do not follow one rhyme scheme like the traditional western sonneteers; rather, he experiments with various schemes to give this poetic form a new spirit, closer to the depth of his experience and proves his ability to create innovative forms within the monotony of traditional European forms. He relies on different forms of rhyme, and sometimes he leaves the rhyme scheme free without a clear system. The paper also aims to demonstrate that he does not simply imitate Western style and themes but rather uses the Western sonnet form to reflect his cultural and religious surroundings.

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محمود درويش بوصفه شاعر سوناتة: توظيف الشكل الشعري الغربي في الشعر العربي الحديث

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الملخص

يعد الشاعر محمود درويش (1941-2008) من أبرز الشعراء الفلسطينيين والعرب الذين ساهموا بشكل فعال ومؤثر في تطوير موضوع الشعر العربي الحديث وأسلوبه. تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى الكشف عن التجريب الذي مارسه درويش في شكل السوناتة في ديوانه الصادر عام 1999 "سرير الغربية" وكيف وظف السوناتة كشكل شعري غربي في موضوعات تهم ثقافة وارث الشرق. تتبع الورقة بإيجاز التطور التاريخي لشكل السوناتة. إذ تعد السوناتة شكلاً شعرياً شهيراً اجتاحت القارة الأوروبية بأكملها منذ أوائل القرن الثالث عشر، ومع ذلك لم تجد مكانتها المهمة والجوهرية في الشعر العربي إلا في أواخر القرن العشرين. وتتبع الورقة كذلك جذور هذا الشكل الشهير الذي يعود بحسب بعض الدراسات إلى الشكل الشعري العربي الموشح الذي كان بارزاً في عهد حكام الأندلس في القرن العاشر الميلادي. توضح الورقة كيف أن سوناتات درويش لا تتبع نظام قافية موحد كما في السوناتات الغربية التقليدية. بدلاً من ذلك، يقوم بتجربة نظام قوافي متعدد و مختلف ثائراً على النظام الغربي وذلك لإعطاء هذا الشكل الشعري روحاً جديدة، أقرب إلى عمق خبرته ويثبت قدرته على خلق أشكال مبتكرة ضمن رتابة الأشكال الأوروبية التقليدية. يعتمد على أنظمة مختلفة من القافية، وأحياناً يترك نظام القافية حرة و دون نظام واضح. تهدف الورقة أيضاً إلى إثبات ان درويش لا يقلد الأسلوب والموضوعات الغربية، بل يستخدم شكل السوناتة الغربية ليعكس موضوعات محيطه الثقافي والديني وقدرته على الابتكار والتجريب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السونيت ، السوناتة ، درويش، التجريب، الشعر الحر، شكسبير، بترارك، الادب المقارن، الشعر

Modern Arabic Poetry: Introduction

Modern Arabic literature has certain significant features that reveal its break from classical literature because of its borrowing of western forms and structures that were perceived as foreign to the eastern context. The Arabic modern era which began with the French campaign in Egypt in 1798 was referred to in Arabic as al-Nahdah (renaissance). The Nahdah was the result of a fruitful collaboration between two forces: indigenous tradition and imported western forms. Furthermore, the transition from the past was a very slow and gradual process (Badawi, 1992, p. 1).

The Nahdah is historically divided into three categories: neoclassical, romantic, and modern. The thesis of this paper is concerned with the latter period, which is known for its experimentation in themes and style. The modern period of al-Nahdah was characterized by its attempts to break free from the rigid forms of al-Qasida. With the modern period during the 1950s, the experiments in form and content in poetry that had launched two centuries before finally began to establish themselves as a recognized poetic form, and what we now call modern Arabic poetry was introduced. This occurred as a result of years of revolution in the Arab world, in which literary genres played a profound role (Allen, 1998, p. 210).

The experimentation with free verse can be clearly traced more among Lebanese poets than among writers of other Arab nationalities. Paul Starkey states that the title of the first mature symbolist poet in Arabic literature is credited to Adib Mazhar, who was acquainted with writers such as the French symbolist Baudelaire and whose poem, "Nashid al-Sukun," is counted as the first symbolist poem in Arabic with its similarities to the works of Baudelaire. Moreover, Saaid Aql followed as "the leading Arabic symbolist poet of his day." (Starkey, 2006, p. 74)

According to Abdul-Settar Al-Assady's *Gateway to Modern Arabic Poetry*, the pioneers of Arab free verse poets were influenced by Western Symbolist poets such as "Baudelaire, Lafourgue, Rimbaud, Valery, Mallarme, the Dadaist Briton... the Modernists Eliot, Pound, Emy Lowell" (Mezyed and Al-Assady, 2007, p. 315). Bassam K. Frangieh states that "the content and form of their poetry had metaphysical and mystical dimensions and was influenced by contemporary Western poetry, especially the French symbolist and surrealist trends" (Frangieh, 2011, p. 225). The revival of modern Arabic verse came to prominence with the rejection of the Arab neo-classical form and the seeking instead of inspiration from the English Romantic poets. Poets such as Said Aql were profoundly influenced by the symbolist movement in Europe, especially with its real attachment to France. The Arabs adopted Eliot's techniques of erasing the boundaries between the past and the present, as well as between poetic and non-poetic writing, in their own works. Impressed by him, they used realistic language to express the sentiments of a new era; they investigated the possibilities of prosody. The extensive use of myth, quotations, images, dramatic pauses, and interior monologue; the use of song and common parlance alongside traditional constructions and object correlative; and the division of the poem into far-flung and complex experiments and an invocation to sensuousness all bear witness to Eliot's influence. (Jabra, 1971, pp. 83-84)

Furthermore, literature in Lebanon seems to be closer to western literature than Arabic literature, with its images of the desert and countryside. Hence, Lebanese writers were more influenced by western culture and literature due to their contact with Europe, especially France. Symbolism in Lebanese literature came as a reaction against the romanticism of the previous era and as a way to deviate from the traditional conventions of Arabic poetry. Poets employed symbols from Lebanon's nature as well as from their French influencers in order to fulfil the need for new ways of expression (Athamneh, 2017, p. 29).

The modern Arab poets preferred free verse as a reaction to the poetry of the previous generation of neo-classical poets like Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim and the Arab Romantic

poets (the Wijdan-like Apollo movement), whose writers were highly classified for their commitment to the conventional style and structure.

The interest in the free verse of the French symbolists by Mazhar, Aql and their contemporaries laid the foundation for Arab poets in the period after the Second World War, when major poets of the Arab world employed French sources in a different context, especially with the introduction of free verse by Nazik Al-Malai'ka and Al-Sayyab. (Starkey, 2006, p.74) Iraqi modern poet Nazik Al-Malai'ka uses in her poetry what is called psychological symbolism (Ahmed 267), which is described as using elements of symbolism to expose the inner struggle of modern man, especially after WWII. The war has a major impact on life, not just in Europe but everywhere else in the world, as modern man is often portrayed as being under political, social, and spiritual pressure, rendering him an isolated, agonized individual in many modern literary works. Thus, modern writers often try to create a new world in their works from the remnants of their war-stricken old one.

Ali Ahmad Said Esber (Adunis) is a well-known Syro-Lebanese poet who explains the aim of the modern Arab poets' resort to western free verse. He states that the modern poet intends to create a mental revolution by destroying the old infrastructures of art and culture that kept the Arabic reader imprisoned in the dungeons of the past. He observes that modern Arabic poetry is subjected to the authorities of traditions and political regimes, "which in turn resulted in the suffocation of Arabic literature and culture" (Athamneh, 2017, p. 270).

Mahmoud Darwish: Literary Biography

Mahmoud Darwish (1942-2008) provided profound solace far beyond their historical grief. Darwish was a sanctuary of light for an entire people in a dark time, delivering a sensational performance as a poet with the halo of a beloved and noble bard. Palestinians flocked in their thousands to see Darwish and hear him recite his magnificent poetry. Even as he wrote with lyrical anguish and soulful rage about Palestine's tragic history and geography, Darwish reshaped Palestine into some metaphysical mystery of loss and longing in being human. He struck a balance between public poetry about collective catastrophe and private poetry about individual suffering. His poetry is distinguished by the delicate fusion of the inner voice of a specific person's plight with the exterior voice of the prevalent fate of all Palestinians.

Darwish was born on March 13, 1941, in the village of Al-Birwa. Al-Birwa is in the eastern Acre district of Al-Jalilee. Salim, his father, was a farmer, and Huriyya, his mother, was a housewife. He was the second child in a family of five sons and three daughters. His parents were from a lower-middle-class Muslim agricultural family. He and his family, along with other Palestinians, fled to Lebanon after Israeli forces attacked and destroyed his village on June 11, 1948 (Abu Eid, 2016, pp. 15-16).

Darwish experienced various types of pain throughout his life. He first experienced the agony of exile when he was only six years old. Darwish was in external exile in Lebanon for one year, from 1948 to 1949. Darwish experienced internal exile after returning with his family to a village other than al-Birwa, his home village. (Abu Eid, 2016, p.44)

Resistance to Israeli occupation is a recurring theme in Darwish's poetry, both during and after his time in Israel. Darwish remained steadfast in his opposition to Israeli oppression and violence against Palestinians, even joining the first Intifada, which lasted from 1987 to 1993.

Regarding his role as a poet, he explained in an interview with *The Progressive Magazine* in 2002 that "poetry could change history and could humanize ... I think that the illusion is very necessary to push poets to be involved and to believe ... but now I think that poetry changes only the poet" (Tamdgidi, 2009, p. viii).

This appears to be a severe judgment born out of a long history of frustration and defeat. Darwish's poetry, on the other hand, elevates and enriches our sense of humanity and higher meaning. He wrote over twenty volumes of poetry and over ten volumes of prose and prose-poetry. Khaled Mattawa points out:

The assumption of the burden of anger arising from a collective wound helps establish the poet as a spokesperson for his people. Darwish's voice was emboldened by his adherence to the basic contours and duties of *Adab al-iltizam* or committed literature, whereby the larger cause of the community supersedes the individual's suffering... Poetry must move within the community like a light clarifying a political vision and must provide intellectual enlightenment (Mattawa, 2014, p. 30).

Darwish's poetry can be divided into three phases: the first, from 1964 to 1970, was spent in Israel, and his poems reflected Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation and their search for identity. Darwish's second phase of poetry spans the years he lived in Beirut from 1972 to 1982. In this period of time, his poetry was preoccupied with Palestinian suffering in exile. Mattawa observes that Darwish's poem during the second phase was mainly concerned with "the arena of struggle," and that two decades later, Darwish would admit that "he felt a strong tension between the poet and the politician in him, a split that did not seem to exist when he lived in Israel" (Mattawa, 2014, p. 78). His mystic existential poem appeared during the third phase after travelling to Paris when the Palestinians were evacuated from Beirut in 1982. Suad Alenzi explicates that Darwish's encounter with European thoughts and philosophy provided him with a profound ponder on the inner life of the individual and helped him understand his essence to know about the self, and that language mediates this process of self-discovery: "Language is the house of the truth of being" (Alenzi, 2015, p.65). It is in this period when Darwish was mainly introduced to Western literature that his poetry took on western forms and universal themes that concerned human beings globally. The sonnet is one of the major European forms and is most celebrated in European literature that influenced Arab poets, including Darwish.

The Sonnet: Definition and Origin

Before delving into Darwish's sonnets, it is necessary to briefly trace the development of the sonnet in Western literature from the early 13th century until the Elizabethan era, its definitions, themes, characteristics, and types.

The debate on the sonnet, after the publication of sonnets by modern Arab poets, is regarded as one of the most controversial debates in the history of Arabic literature. This is due to its western origin, and it seemed odd to the poetical taste of the western mentality and

imagination. Yet there is a theory that states that the roots of the sonnet descended from eastern poetry during the 12th century. But before tracing its Arabic origin, it is significant to explore the definition of the sonnet according to some valuable literary dictionaries.

The sonnet is a 14-line poem that is structured with a specific meter and rhyme scheme, with lines written in iambic pentameter. However, sonnets vary in their rhyme structure, such as in the Shakespearean sonnet or the Miltonic sonnet, for example. In addition, the sonnet consists of two sections: an eight-line octave, in which the poet expresses his emotions and deep sorrows, and a six-line sestet, in which he concludes the poem and comments on his theme (Oppenheimer, 1982, p. 292). Abrams defines the sonnet as a "lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme" (Abrams, 1999, p. 290). Chris Baldick also presents a similar definition, stating that it is a "lyric poem comprising 14 rhyming lines of equal length: iambic pentameters in English, Alexandrine syllables in French, and Hendela syllables in Italian," with two patterns of rhyme schemes: the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean (Baldick, 1991, p. 239). Cuddon states that "the Italian form is the most common." The octave develops one thought; there is then a 'turn' or volta, and the sestet grows out of the octave, varies it and completes it" (Cuddon, 1977, p.844)

As a term, the sonnet was derived from the Italian "sonetto," which means either "little sound" or "song" (Cuddon, 1977, p. 843). It is assumed that the sonnet is the longest-lived of all poetic forms. What makes it so is its brevity as a style and love as a theme, two essential elements, to mention but a few. In this respect, "the sonnet, because of its brevity, always gives an impression of immediacy, as if it proceeded directly and confessionally or conversationally from the speaker, and therefore from the creator of that speaker" (Spiller, 1992, p. 6). As for love, the sonnet is the "choice mode of expressing romantic love" (Blum, 2012). The sonnet is adopted by many countries for the above reasons, but it is presented in various forms and structures different from the original one. However, in all its variations, the sonnet keeps tackling the theme of love and presenting a problem to be solved at the end.

Some attribute the sonnet's origins to classical odes and epigrams, while others attribute it to a lyrical ancestry in Provence. However, to dispel all doubt, the octave pattern had a strong affinity with the Sicilian "Strambotto." Most authorities agree that the "Strambotto," which consisted of two quatrains, was lengthened by a double, six-line refrain, resulting in the sonnet. It's unclear how this was accomplished. It is enough to know that the first sonnet was offered by Giacomo da Lentino of the Sicilian School in the 1220s during the reign of Emperor Frederick II (Wilkins, 2015, p. 18). According to Peter Dronke, something innate in its flexible form made a significant contribution to its survival far beyond its region of origin. The form consists of two quatrains followed by two tercets with the symmetrical rhyme scheme ABABABAB CDCDCD, with the sense continuing on a new path after the midway break (Dronke, 1968, pp. 151-4). According to William Baer, the first eight lines of the earliest Sicilian sonnets are exactly equivalent to the eight-line Sicilian folksong stanza known as the Strambotto. In order to create the new 14-line sonnet form, da Lentini (or whoever invented it) added two tercets to the Strambotto (Baer, 2005, pp. 153–154).

On the other hand, there is another theory that assumes that the origin of the sonnet had Arabian descent. Hassanally Ladha argues that both the roots of the structure and content of

the sonnet extend deeply back to Arabic poetry and cannot be diminished to the "invention" of Giacomo da Lentini. He observes that "in its Sicilian origins, the sonnet evinces literary and epistemological contact with the qasida," emphasizing that the sonnet did not emerge concurrently with its allegedly defining 14-line structure. (Ladha, 2020, p. 17). It is also suggested that the sonnet has similarities with what is called the muwashshah, an Arabic poetic form of five stanzas and a secular musical genre. It also has rhyme and meter. According to Kamal Abu-Deeb, "the polyglot Sicilian court of Frederick II (1194–1250) was the forum in which poet Giacomo da Lentini, father of the Italian sonnet, might have heard, adopted, and adapted Arabic poetry of the muwashshah type" (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p.133). Thomas George Tucker states that the Arabic rhymed verse of fourteen lines, called ghazals, "appear to anticipate the sonnet, a form that arose in Sicily in a court frequented by cultured Moslems" (Tucker, p. 128).

Abu-Deeb further draws a comparison between the muwashshah he has written and a Shakespearean sonnet, concluding: "a sonnet, written intentionally by a pre-established, pre-conceived model, broke through the barrier of the model and invented itself as a sonnet with a different structure" (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p.78). He wonders:

The sonnet had been developed in Europe with full awareness of Arabic poetry in Spain and, specifically, of the muwashshah, and in particular the muwashshah as song. Now flashes of intriguing details began to shoot into my space: the Arabs had for centuries known a structure they called simt. And the word sonot, sonet, sinot is an Arabic word. Plus, remarkably, the Qurtuba poet Hasan ibn al-Hasan was called al-sonat. Did this sonat compose sonets? (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p.79)

Francis Petrarch (1304–1374) and Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) were the first Italian poets who established the sonnet as one of the major poetic forms. The ordinary sonnet consists of fourteen lines in iambic pentameter with some differences in rhyme scheme. There are three basic sonnet forms: the Petrarchan, which has an octave rhyming ABBAABBA and a sestet rhyming CDECDE or CDCCDC; the Spenserian, which has three quatrains and a couplet, rhyming abab, BCBS, CDCD, EE; and the Shakespearean, which has three quatrains and a couplet, rhyming ABAB, CDCD, EF, GG (Greene, 2012, p.1318). Abu-Deeb puts significant questions concerning the development of the sonnet in Italy and Petrarch's credit to its invention:

why is Petrarch the poet accredited with inventing the sonnet form? He is Italian. How did Italy come into the picture if the sonnet originated in Arab Spain, and why did it take so long, first to develop in Italy then to travel across Europe and reach shake spear (or is it, as he himself signed his name, shakespeare, shak esber being an Arab name)? More puzzles. It was like looking for Darwin's missing link. And I did not even know that a missing link was missing at all. There was no evidence that a link existed. Just an intuition. (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p.79)

For years, Abu-Deeb investigated the origin of the sonnet, attempting to find answers to the above question. He began to trace the origin of the courtly love and the Troubadours' poetry and their origin to Arabic poetry. Following the structures of the Troubadours' poems a century

before Petrarch's poetry, Abu-Deeb found out that the sonnets were written in Sicily in the court of Frederick II (1194–1250). He found out that the couplets of those poets are identical to the structure of the *kharja* (the last phrase) of the *muwashshah* (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p. 81). It is assumed that the poetry of troubadours was influenced by Arabic poetry written in the Iberian Peninsula (Veldeman, 2001, p.94). Abu-Deeb points out that the troubadours lived in the court of Frederick II, where da Lentini was one of the major poets in the court. Abu-Deeb suggests:

It is likely that Lentini and his group were themselves influenced in their use of the local spoken dialect by what they had known about the use of colloquial Arabic in the genre known as *zajal*, for which Ibn Quzman was famous, as well as by the important and distinctive role that the *kharja* (the last line of the *muwashshah*) played in its construction: the *kharja* was most attractive when used in the colloquial. (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p.84)

For many centuries, Arab Muslims have had the advantage of exerting a tremendous and commendable influence on the West in a variety of fields and arenas, including literature. Andalusia served as a bridge between the Islamic world and Europe. It was there that the Europeans were introduced to the *muwashshah*. Handal defines the *muwashshah* as "a short poem in the Arabic tradition, up to ten or twenty lines in English, which tends to concentrate on a single subject or theme." It is thought to have "broken off" from a longer poetic form, the *qasida* (Handal, 2012, p. 118).

At the beginning of the tenth century, an opening was found in the reenergized ramparts of classicism in Andalusia, most likely because it was not entirely Arabized or Islamized. Ana Ruiz observes that "During the 9th and 10th centuries, Andalusian literature, poetry, and prose flourished, particularly one style of poetic compositions formulated in classical Arabic known as *muwashaha*" (Ruiz, A. 2007, p. 36).

The term "*muwashshah*" comes from the Arabic word "*wishah*" or "*wushah*," which refers to a type of embellished sash or scarf worn over the shoulders by women during the medieval period. *Muwashshah* also means "embellished" or "decorated," referring to the embellishment in poetic texts (Shannon, 2015, pp. 43–44). Roger Allen claims that it is with Andalusian strophic lyrics recognized as the *muwashshah* and its accompanying *zajal* that *ghazal* or *dalliance* finds some of its most modern influences.

It is with Andalusian strophic poetry—the *muwashshah* and *zajal*—that the *ghazal* makes some of its most innovative contributions. Early examples of the *muwashshah* poem are seen by some scholars as reflecting the cultural complexities of Andalusian society by juxtaposing a series of strophes and verses that bear an *Udhr* stamp with a final strophe—often a popular song—that is decidedly different (Allen, 2000, p. 108).

Habib Hassan Touma defines it as "secular musical genre using *muwaššah* texts as lyrics. This tradition can take two forms: the *wašla* of Aleppo and the Andalusian *nubah* of the western part of the Arab world" (Touma, 1996, p. 83). Abu-Deeb states that da Lentini had a profound impact on the western poets who "developed and refined [tawshih] by composing dozens of variants of structures of the *muwashshah*, and making it one of the most exciting genres of poetry and singing for many centuries (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p.85). Also, the renowned Iraqi critic

and translator Aabdalwahid Lulua points out that Giacomo da Lentino was influenced by the Spanish Troubadours whose poetry resembled in its structure to the zajal and muwashshah (Lulua, 11), yet he had his take on Abu-Deeb's theory about the sonnet's descent from Arabic muwashshah when he (Abdu-Deep) mentioned his theory in the introduction to his translation to Shakespeare's sonnets in 2010. Lulua states that Abu-Deeb's information is inaccurate concerning the origin of the theme of courtly love, which was one of the major themes of the sonnet form. According to Lulua, the theme of courtly love flourished in Provence, France, during the 11th century. It then became prominent in Sicily when the poets migrated from France to Sicily after the crusades in 1209 (Lulua, 2013, p. 22).

The Petrarchan sonnet is concerned with the themes by raising the problem in the octave and presenting a solution in the sestet. Love was the main theme in almost all of Petrarch's 317 sonnets; they were devoted "in praise of his love for one woman, his Laura" (Spiller 1) or Dante's love for Beatrice as reflected in his *Vita Nuova* (Greene, 2012, p. 1319). Cuddon attributes that theme of courtly love to Petrarch, who "usually used it for love poetry and more particularly for that semi-Platonic and semi-religious devotion to the Lady or Donna, which subsequently became a cliché of love poetry" (Cuddon, 1998, p. 844). The sonneteer sometimes addresses his readers directly, asking for forgiveness "for the failure of his style to achieve coherence" and simultaneously suggesting that the intensity of his incoherence will beget pity (Spiller, 1992, p. 26). This technique of persuasion was used by Petrarch, who later influenced Sir Philip Sidney.

It is worth noting that Petrarch seemed to stand at the head of the movement that influenced the English sonnet. English literature was introduced to the Petrarchan sonnet through Chaucer's translations (Spiller, 1992, p. 64). The sonnet reached English shores from Italy through the sonnets of "Thomas Wyatt, who preferred the sestet's closing couplet" (Greene, 2012, p. 1320). Wyatt "made the first formal change in the structure of the sonnet since its invention in southern Italy in the early thirteenth century" (Spiller, 1992, p. 81). Influenced by Petrarch, Wyatt wrote in vernacular, and unlike Petrarch, he changed the structure of the sestet "from 3+3 to 4+2, ending with a rhymed couplet" (Spiller, 1992, p. 83). The significance of the rhymed couplet is to present how the speaker, in the end, comes to self-realization that exhibits a kind of solution to the question raised in the octave.

Many English poets wrote great sonnets such as Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*, yet Shakespeare's sonnets remain the greatest of all time. What is unique and remarkable about Shakespeare's:

[I]s the recurring sense that the speaker is being brushed aside, by a lover who is insufficient: not interested enough in him even to be cruel. We have here an /I/ not so much tormented as in limbo (to recur to a Dantean parallel): marginalised by the absorption of his patron in other concerns and by the promiscuity of his mistress, and driven to accuse himself of inadequacy, he seeks desperately for a reflex of himself in eyes that will not look (even with disdain) on him (Spiller, 1992, p.154-155).

Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets throughout his life. These sonnets actually explore the thematic expression of his unique experience with love and his obsessive thinking of the time.

Shakespeare not only describes time's ruthless consumption of beauty and love but also announces that he has done all his efforts to surpass time and preserve immortality in writing poetry. The Shakespearean sonnet "comprises three quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming ababcdcdefefgg" (Baldick, 1991, p.239).

While the neoclassical Arabic poets of the modern age drew their themes and dictions from classic Arabic poetry, the Arabic modernist poets derived theirs from European culture. They tried to introduce the Arabic reader to the Western romantic spirit. They rejected the classical symbols, themes, and metaphors and sought new horizons within the intellectual context of European literature. Shmuel Moreh writes:

[T]he modern Arab poets ... turned to Western poetry to supply them with suitable forms. So they experimented with Western forms, such as stanza, the couplet, the sonnet, blank verse and free verse ... generating new subject matter from European literature without being confined to the theme of the European author. (Moreh, 1979, p.175-176)

The Sonnet in the Arab World

Modern Arab poets have experimented lately with writing the sonnet. As the Europeans used this well-known form centuries ago, the Arab poets wrote the sonnet only after 1946, when Omar Abu-Riche (1910–1991), an influential Syrian poet, wrote his sonnet "Leda," which depicts the mythical story of Zeus and Leda. Abu-Riche did not show that his poem belongs to the sonnet form as if he felt that the reference to the form being borrowed from the West would double the strangeness of the poem (albazei, 2004, 67). Abu-Riche followed the Shakespearean sonnet in terms of length and structure. The first five lines of his poem correspond to the quatrain in the Shakespearean sonnet, while the last two lines correspond to the couplet. But still, his poem cannot be perceived as the sonnet form known in Europe because Abu-Riche adheres to the traditional rhythmic structure of the Arabic qasida.

Another modern Arabic poet who wrote the sonnet before Darwish was Salah Abdel Sabour (1931–1981), an Egyptian free verse poet, playwright, essayist, and editor. In his first collection, "al-Nas fi biladi" (People in My Country) (1957), Abdel Sabour, unlike Abu-Riche, made his first attempt to break with the classical qasida by experimenting with free verse and other western forms. In his Divan, he wrote a poem entitled "Sonata," which is very close in length and rhyme to the western sonnet (Meisami and Starky, 1998, p. 19). His sonata is composed of three quatrains and a couplet where the speaker dreams of living with his beloved in an ideal world full of love and beauty.

As for translation, it was the Iraqi-Palestinian author, artist, and translator Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1919–1994) who published the first book entitled Shakespeare's Sonnets: A Study with Forty Translated Sonnets (1983). In translating the term "sonnet," Jabra committed to the original term, transliterating it into "soneetat" (). After Jabra, the debate continued over the accurate mechanisms for translating poetic stanzas and the titles of Arab translators. Sometimes they are translated into songs (ughniaat), sometimes they are chants (ahazij), or it is enough to preserve the original: sonnets. Besides Jabara, there were a number of Arab translators who

competed in translating Shakespeare's sonnets, such as the Syrian Kamal Abu Deeb, the Iraqis Aabdalwahid Lulua and Sargon Boulus, and the Egyptians Bader Tawfik and Mohamed Anani.

While Lulua considered Jabra's translation of Shakespeare's sonnet "elegant and accurate," he criticizes Jabra's elaboration of the English condensed phrase so it could be comprehensible to the Arabic reader (Lulua, 2013, p. 13). In an article entitled "Critique of Jabra's Translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 55," Sargon Boulus made a similar observation about Jabra's translation, stating that he did not take into account the verbal context of the sonnet and that the reader may feel the presence of Jabra's spirit more than Shakespeare's (Boulus, 2016).

Darwish's Sonatas

In 1999, Mahamoud Darwish published his *Divan Sareer Al Gharibeh*, which is entirely devoted to the themes of love and spiritual alienation. It was written in the period when Darwish started to investigate topics related to his own dilemma as a poet and as a human being. He tackled, in this period of his life, themes of love, death, and existential crisis; he derived his themes from ordinary daily life to reshape them from a philosophical perspective. The shift from the stage of patriotism to that of heroism was due to his deteriorating health condition after he was diagnosed with stomach cancer.

In the *Divan*, the dialogue between the poet and another character, who may be his beloved or Palestine, shapes the clear structural pattern of the poems. The poet begins to return to himself and creates another personality from this one to use as an outlet for expressing his passions and sorrows as he tries to express his desire to live like any other ordinary human being. In the poem, the poet creates reconciliation between his poetic soul and his soul as a man. According to Karim Obeid, in this collection, Darwish "reached a dramatic climax by recalling his high artistic skills and applying them to one poetic purpose, which is the poem about love" (Obeid, 2010).

The sonnet, as a poetical form, had a great impact on the development of human intellect during the Renaissance. The radical shift in the notion of form went hand in hand with a shift in human thinking, where the sonnet played a significant role in refashioning the soul of the Renaissance figure. The sonnet is structured to form an inner dialogue in which the speaker submits an argument, which is presented by means of a preposition, describing the problem or asking a question. The posed question would come to a resolution with the last six lines (sestet). Thus, the innovation of the sonnet was perceived as an usher to herald the dawn of modern thinking considering the sonnet to be the first lyrical form which deals with the inner conflict of the human being (Spiller, 1994, 64). Darwish employs his sonatas in the *divan* to probe the existential dilemma of his inner psyche through inner dialogues. Before the Renaissance and the rise of humanism, the speaker of the poems was a hero or a supernatural figure, and his actions were determined by undefeated fate. With the Renaissance and the rise of the sonnets, the speaker of the sonnet embodied the common problems of the ordinary man, which he encountered in his daily life. The speaker of Darwish's sonatas is no different from Shakespeare's speaker. He is not the same speaker in his resistant poetry who calls for heroism

and patriotism, representing the collective voice of his nation, but a man who presents his inner thoughts and feelings, representing the universal voice.

What is significant and inspiring about this divan as a topic of study is Darwish's employment of the sonnet in six poems entitled "sonata." The paper attempts to explore the use of the Western sonnet within the Arabic rhythmic structures in Darwish's *Sareer Al Gharibeh* and his contribution to the innovations of the Arabic free verse. Besides the theme of love, Darwish's collection resonates with music and is surrounded by rhythm, rising from six sonnets that permeate the poetic body of the collection. Abdullah AlBayyari states that the sonnets are structurally employed to connect the sections of the divan and to ensure the fluidity of the music and the harmony of the rhythm (AlBayyari, 2012).

The Divan, *Sareer Al Gharibeh* is divided into nine sections, each section consists of four poems, and the first poem in each section is written in the form of a sonnet, entitled by Darwish "Sonata: and given to each sonata a number. Darwish exploited all his poetic potential to develop Western sonnet art within the Arab poetic context. One of the changes that Darwish made was breaking the most important system in the poetic form, which is the rhyme scheme of the poem. Darwish broke the law and left the rhyme scheme free. Due to the shortness of the poems, titling can be both disturbing to the symmetrical composition of the poem in addition to pre-structuring a path of understanding of the poems, as it is known that "A narrator should not supply interpretations of his work... "A title, unfortunately, is in itself a key to interpretation" (Echo, 1984, p.1), and imposing a title on a sonnet is an implicit prioritization of a specific interpretation of the work.

As it has been argued that the earliest forms of sonnets have traits of Andalusian flirt poetry as well as simt poetry that has been known for the Arabs for centuries and it may have been the seed of influencing western literature with what is called sonnet as the name derivatively suggests (Abu-Deeb, 2016, p.135), and Darwish's adaptation of these sonnets can be regarded as an old merchandise retrieval. Those forms of poetry travelled abroad and were developed intrinsically and returned to the Arab world through poets like Darwish. In an interview he explicitly elaborates the reasons behind his experimentation in the sonnet form:

I am very erudite and keen to constantly develop my knowledge of what is happening in the poetical movement globally. I am also intellectually open to the relationship of Arab culture with global human culture because we cannot develop without absorbing and understanding the culture of others and their own experiences at the poetic level, and Arab poetry does not have the potential to develop based on its historical context alone; it evolves through interaction and communication with the poetry of others. As for it being said that my Divan is Western in its formation, Arab modernity did not take place without Western poetry, and it would not have come into prominence without Western poetry as texts and theories. On the contrary, "The Stranger's Bed" is written in sound and well-constructed Arabic, with sound rhythms, and from a perspective that is open to the world. As for the sonnets that I wrote, they are a kind of poetic experimentation. It is true that it is of Western origin, but there are some studies demonstrating that the sonnet form came from the muwashshah. The Arab influence may have passed into the sonnet through the muwashshah, and it allowed me to retrieve and experiment with it,

particularly when the most important poets of the world stopped writing (the sonata), and I wrote it as a kind of experimenting my fantasy and potentials. (Al-Khair, 2010, 39-40)

Darwish's sonatas are composed of 14 lines. In an interview, he states that the key to his poetry is rhythm, and he considers a poem without structural integrity to be "liquefied, a state that necessitates finding the relationship between the surfaces and depths of expressions (Wazen, 2006, p. 85).

The sonatas in the Divan show that Darwish intends to write about the most transcendental topic that occupies the human mind, which is love. He returns to his own self and to the affairs of the soul, where he uses the pronoun "I," which is one of the poignant characteristics of the Shakespearean sonnets. He also adheres to the structural form of the Western sonnet with its fourteen lines, yet he revolts against its rhyme scheme. For instance, in "Sonata I," Darwish does not follow any western rhyme scheme, preferring to use his own scheme to create what we might call the Darwishian sonnet.

In "Sonata I", Darwish does not follow the traditional rhyme scheme of the Western sonnet, rather he uses his own innovative rhyme (abbccddc cfdghc) divided into an octave and sestet following the Petrarchan form. The first sonnet shows that Darwish experienced the rhyme scheme away from the Petrarchan which is read in the octave: abbaabba, and in the sestet: cdecde.

In "Sonata II" he creates another different rhyme scheme (abcb decb fgcb hb) divided into three quatrains and a couplet relying on the Shakespearean form. While "Sonata III" follows a little bit more regular and disciplined rhyme scheme (aaab cccb ddb eeb) which is not familiar and difficult since the line with rhyme is separated and scattered among the quatrains. This requires the poet to tighten the musical links along the syllables that are not linked to a homogeneous rhyme, and to choose semantic and phonetic units that give the reader the opportunity to leave the musical climate temporarily, without breaking the flow of rhythm. That is why, the speaker of "Sonata III" asks for contemplation:

حريزٌ كما ساخِنٌ. وعلى الناي أن يتأنى قليلا
ويصقلُ سُوناتَه ، عندما تقعان عليَّ غموضاً جميلا
كمعنى أهبّة الغُزي ، لا يستطيع الو صولا
ولا الانتظار الطويل أمام الكلام ، فيختارني عتبه
أحبُّ من الشعر عَفْوِيَّةَ النثر والصورة الخافية
بلا قَمَرٍ للبلاغة : حين تسرين حافية تتركُ القافية
جماعَ الكلام ، وينكسرُ الوُزْنُ في ذروة التجربة (11-5)

[Your silk is hot. And the flute must go a bit slow, to refine a sonata, when you mysteriously and beautifully fall upon me like the willingness to be naked, they cannot reach nor wait before the long speech, so his reprimand chooses me. I like from poetry the spontaneous prose and the hidden image without a moon for eloquence: when you walk barefooted, the rhyme abandons the cohesion of the speech, and the rhythm is broken in the prime of the experience]

These lines demonstrate that resorting to the sonnet is not merely experimentation in a European poetic form or an exposure of the poet's ability to control his poetic tools and experiences. Rather, it is in essence (particularly when it indicates an explicit success, as in Darwish's examples) an exercise in controlling conscience and balancing the personal and the general, the subjective and the objective, in form and content, and in heart and mind. There is no doubt that literary historians will debate for a long time the reasons why the sonnet poems are capable of detonating the purest power in the souls of poets: spiritual and mental, mental and sensual, lyrical and epic, artistic and intellectual. It is astonishing that this short, compact form remained able to produce wonders in all human languages, and wherever there was a poet holding the tools of the art of poetry,

In "Sonata IV", Darwish adopts the style of three quatrains and a couplet as it is presented by the Shakespearian sonnet; however, Darwish took the liberty in deviating the Shakespearean rhyme scheme which is ABAB-CDCD-EFEF-GG to his own rhyme scheme that reads ABBA-CDDC-EFFG-HH. This liberation is justified as a coping mechanism with the tendency toward the blank verse, so it is an adaptation of sonnets within the taste of modern day recipients. The subject matter of this sonnet is listed among the Shakespearian themes; it is the peaceful nature that is contrasted with the metaphor of its own wildness, and it is reconciled in the end with the triumph over the artificial/ industrial agency through the analogy of the deer and the prospect of a wolf:

صُنُوبَةٌ فِي يَمِينِكَ . صَفْصَافَةٌ فِي شِمَالِكَ . هَذَا
هُوَ الصَّيْفِ : إِحْدَى غَزَالَاتِكَ الْمَائَةِ اسْتَسَلَمْتُ لِلنَّدَى
وَنَامْتُ عَلَى كَتِفِي , قُرْبَ إِحْدَى جِهَاتِكَ , مَاذَا
لَوْ انْتَبَهَ الذَّنْبُ , وَاحْتَرَقَتْ غَابَةٌ فِي الْمَدَى (1-4)

[On your right there is a pine tree and a willow on your left. This is summer and one of your hundred dears yielded to the dew and slept upon my shoulder near one of your sides. What if the wolf takes notice, and the forest burned in the domain]

In his fifth sonata, "Sonata V", Darwish shows the strongest commitment to the regulations of sonnets in such a way that the rhyme scheme he uses is identical to the Shakespearean one, which reads as ABAB-CDCD-EFEF-GG. The theme of the sonata is presented in a relatively highly metaphorical language and it is similar to Shakespeare's in conversing the relationship between the poet and a feminine figure. In this sonnet, Darwish demonstrates his ability to go by the book so that he would have an example of strict regulation to refer to in case of criticism against his liberation from the rules of writing sonnets.

As for the sixth sonnet, it is identical in the rhyme scheme of the first quartet to the Shakespearian sonnet which is ABAB, yet the scheme breaks free in the second quartet and roams freely until the end of the poem. The rhyme scheme is structured eventually as ABAB-CCDB-EEFB-BB. The only schematic resemblance is in the first quartet, and the poem is considered a sonnet due to the overall quartet division as well as the couplet adaptation. As for the content of the poem, it is addressed more explicitly than the rest of the sonnets to a feminine

recipient and she is well-personified in the dream/ reality dichotomy, and this feminine feature is both a Shakespearean and a Petrarchan feature:

كما تحلمين تكونين , يا صيفِ أرضِ شماليّةٍ
يُخَدَّرُ غاباته الألفَ في سَطْوَةِ النومِ . نامي
ولا توقظي جسداً يشتهي جسداً في منامي (14-12)

[As you dream, you will become, O the summer of northern land which put thousands of its forests into oblivion through the power of the slumber. Sleep and do not wake a body desires a body in a dream]

In the subject matter of these six sonatas, Darwish is concerned with the theme of love. The sequence of the European sonnets usually refers to the various stages of love, but according to Darwish, this sequence does not refer to stages, as much as it depicts a growing state of love. The sonatas are addressed more explicitly to a mysterious feminine recipient and she is well-personified in the dream/ reality dichotomy, and this feminine feature is both a Shakespearean and a Petrarchan feature. For instance, in "Sonata I," he writes:

حلمت بأنك آخر ما قاله
لي الله حين رأيتهما في المنام ' فكان الكلام... (14-13).

[I dreamed that you were the last thing God said to me. And when I saw you the in dream, the words came into existence] (Sonata I).

In his "Sonata II," he also, like the European sonneteer, he address his mysterious beloved:

أنا من رأى غده إذ رآك . أنا من رأى
أناجيل يكتبها الوثني الأخير على سفح جلعاد (٩-١٠)

[I who see his tomorrow if I see you. I who sees the last pagan writing the Gospels on the downhills of Gilead]

With the rest of the sonatas, Darwish keeps addressing his unknown beloved through feminine pronouns with one exception in "Sonata III" when he addressing both his beloved and night in the first two quatrains, then, he addresses his beloved only in the rest of the sonata:

أحب من الليل أوله , عندما تأتيان معا
يداً بيد , ورويداً رويداً تَضْمَانِي مَقْطَعاً مَقْطَعاً
تطيران بي , فوق . يا صاحبي أقيما ولا تُسرعا
وناما على جانبي كمثل جناحي سُؤْنُوَّةٍ مُتْعَبَةٍ (4-1)

[What I love of the night its beginning, when you both come hand in hand, and little and little you embrace me piece by piece, you both take me to fly high up. Oh my companions stay a while and do not be in a hurry, and sleep on my both sides like the wings of a tired swallow]

Like Shakespeare's "Sonnet 101" who beseeches for the Muse not to be silent so he could write fine and elevated poem to immortalize his beloved "Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?," Darwish also resorts to his culture and summon mythological goddesses from Egypt and Mesopotamia. Darwish also alludes to Old Testament "And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light" (Genesis, verse 1-3). He needs his own Muse to provide him with light and air to create his poetry as he show in (sonata I):

وتحتاج أنشودتي للتنفّس: لا الشعرُ شعراً
ولا النثرُ نثراً. حلمت بأنك آخر ما قاله
لي الله حين رأيتكما في المنام ' فكان الكلام (14-12)

[And my song needs to breath: poetry is not poetry/ Nor the prose is prose. I dreamed you were the last thing that God said to me. And when I saw you both in dream, the words come into being]

This indicates that Darwish does not blindly imitate the Western style and content; rather, he uses the Western sonnet form to reflect his environment culturally and religiously. His beloved in the sonnet remains ambiguous so that the reader cannot identify who exactly she is. In Shakespeare's sonnets, though the beloved is also unknown to the reader, it is predictable that Shakespeare refers to a lady due to the period when the theme of courtly love was at its peak. While in Darwish's case, things are more complicated; his beloved might be his usurped country.

A very well-equipped and keen reader can observe the renewal that Darwish experimented with in his sonatas. This shows his artistic maturity and self-awareness in the late phase of his poetic life. In his "Sonata II," Darwish does not mechanically imitate the Western sonnet by following the traditional rhyme scheme but ends the last lines unrhymed to stay loyal to the modern free verse. He also compares his poetic ability and his need for his beloved to inspire him.

If the first two sonatas anticipate the types of love, their nature, ideal time, and manifestations, the third sonata depicts the beloved as the lover wants. The poem harmonizes the lyrical form and the content. Darwish states the broken rhyme scheme is imposed upon him because of his beloved:

حين تسرين حافيةً تتركُ القافية
جماعَ الكلام , وينكسرُ الوَزنُ في ذروة التجربة (10-9)

[When you walk barefooted, you leave the poem unrhymed, the rhythm is broken at the zenith of the experience.]

From this point of view, Darwish tries to develop his poetry and finds what he wants in the sonnet form and in the space of the poetic images he depicts in this divan. Darwish's poetic images are no longer just tools that simulate and monitor reality but rather open the way for a continuous search for ways. These images are intertwined with each other and create multiple and ambiguous meanings through the employment of symbols and myths. Abdul-Aziz Salihi

states that Darwish dedicates Sareer Al Gharibeh for love to refute the enemy's allegations that Darwish is an extremist poet of violence and hatred (Salihi 2016). Salih's statement supports the idea that his mysterious beloved might be his country, and the sonnet form is only a mask or a Trojan horse to pass along his patriotic poetry disguised in that Western form. Unlike Shakespeare, the theme of love in Darwish's sonatas takes on a militant dimension, confirming the Palestinian identity in its universal and human essence. The dialogues of the self with the other do not necessarily refer to the man-woman dialogues. In "Sonata II," he addresses his beloved through references to places in Palestine and allusions to the Bible:

أَنَا مَنْ رَأَى غَدَهُ إِذْ رَأَىكَ . أَنَا مَنْ رَأَى
 أَنَا جِيلَ يَكْتُبُهَا الْوَثْنِيُّ الْأَخِيرُ عَلَى سَفْحِ جَلْعَادَ
 قَبْلَ الْبِلَادِ الْقَدِيمَةِ أَوْ بَعْدَهَا . وَأَنَا الْغَيْمَةُ الْعَائِدَةُ
 إِلَى تِينَةٍ تَحْمَلُ أَسْمِي , كَمَا يَحْمَلُ السِّيفُ وَجْهَ الْقَتِيلِ (9-12)

[I who see his tomorrow if I see you. I who see the last pagan writing the Gospels on the downhills of Gilead before the old country or after it. I am a cloud returned to a fig tree which holds my name as a sword holds the face of the murdered]

The stanza shows that Darwish does not derive his dialogue between the lover and his lady from the tragedies of the romantic epics but from historical and religious references that are related to the culture of his country. The reader cannot be deceived under the illusion that Palestine is absent from the scene of Sareer Al Gharibeh, as indicated by its absence from the fields of naming, but rather it is present in the intelligent referral manner that Darwish wanted this time: there is Gilead, Sodom, Moab, and Jericho, and there is the Song of Songs, Mary, Christ, and the Gospels, along with Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, Andalusia, and Samarkand.

Conclusion

It has been said that the sonnets, unlike the recitable poems, are meant to be read in private. This reflection of personal dimensions in the poem made the Shakespearean sonnets as representatives of the hard times of his personal crises. As for Darwish, he was born in the occupied Palestine and experienced its suffering since his very early days, during his youth, and until very recently and therefore, his poetry was employed for the Palestinian cause. In this sense, he is similar to Shakespeare in using presumably personally-read sonnets in presenting personal issues and crises. It is possible to conclude that considering sonnet as an Andalusian heritage, Darwish revived the form and reintroduced it to Arabic literature. He did not stop at reintroducing the sonnet, but took a step further in demonstrating the possibility of strictly going with its as well as being tolerant to contextualized modifications.

Besides, Darwish's sonatas come in response to the waves of criticisms directed against him, and the desire to keep him in the circle of violence and extremism, hence, uprooting him from his existence and humanity. He addresses his beloved who could be Palestine who yearns for the end of his exile and dreams of its freedom. Through these sonatas, Darwish indicates the universality of the Palestinian poet who could prove his creative ability to function his theme in an aesthetic lyrical forms like the sonnet.

Darwish's sonatas do not follow one rhyme scheme like the traditional western sonneteers; rather, he experiments with various schemes to give this poetic form a new spirit, closer to the depth of his experience and proves his ability to create innovative forms within the monotony of traditional European forms. He relies on different forms of rhyme, and sometimes he leaves the rhyme scheme free without a clear system. The paper also aims to demonstrate that he does not simply imitate Western style and themes but rather uses the Western sonnet form to reflect his cultural and religious surroundings.

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