

ESCAPE OF ACCULTURATION IN MAHMOUD DARWISH POETRY

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Original Article

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Abstract

The aspiration of this research is to prove the hypothesis that people should maintain their true selves regardless of the limitation of boundaries and land. People who migrate during war usually become victims of identity crises. This research aspires people to help the refugees and admire their struggles to prevent them from the loss of their identity and inherited culture. This research is qualitative research that describes the poems of Mahmoud Darwish from his collection A River Dies of Thirst under the influence of cultural studies. This research is based on the theory of Gloria Anzaldua, presented in her essay "How to Tame a wild Tongue", that people should maintain their cultural identity while migrating. They should not have to give up their sense of self and their culture and their language to be acceptable and successful in their new life. This research applies the descriptive method of research to analyse the process of acculturation that which culture war effect and how the war affects someone's life. Through this research, the researcher can highlight the issues of refugees in their migrating country. And this research will help people, refugees, to maintain their true identity and inherited culture in their new life.

Keywords: Acculturation, Identity crisis, Refugees, Culture studies, Language, Sense of self.

Introduction

Identity is the set of characteristics which make you to be definitely recognisable. The social identity of a person indicated to which group of society he belongs. Oscar Wilde described identity as people are often other people. Their opinions are those of others, their lives are imitations, and their passions are quotes (Wilde, 1985). The physical, social and mental characteristics of individuals are the basis of a social group. For social, economic and digital inclusion, and "almost infinitely negotiable" (Bauman, 2004) it is reliable, as it enables us to exercise our fundamental human rights, including the capacity to access healthcare, pensions, social benefits, and more. However, in order to obtain those rights, a person must be able to establish his or her identity. A person's genuine identity—who he is, how he perceives and experiences the world, as well as the possibilities and obstacles he encounters because of his gender, social class, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, religion, age, and disability—is greatly influenced by his social identity. A humanities field that attracts attention is cultural studies. The "cultural" has emerged as a "master trope" in the humanities, blurring the barriers between textual analysis of popular culture and social theory and emphasising the fringes of power rather than repeating existing hierarchies of power (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 3). Cultural studies look at people as 'ordinary' and 'marginal' social groups in which they transformed being members of that particular culture. It considers people as the potential producers of society who give rise to new social values and cultural languages. It is an attempt to think about the everyday life of people and to see how the power structure of society responds towards it (Hebdige, 1997).

Mahmoud Darwish is a Palestinian poet who lived his life in Paris. He was born in the Israeli army-occupied hamlet of al-Birwa in Galilee. He and his family were classified as "internal refugees" or

"present-absent aliens" because they had missed the official Israeli census. In 1960, Darwish was imprisoned for reciting poetry without permission among villagers and passengers. After his poetry "Identity Card" was used as a protest song, he was kept under house arrest. In the period between 1987 and 1993, Darwish was a member of the PLO's executive committee. The final collection Darwish has in Arabic was titled *A River Dies of Thirst*. The Arabic title of the book was changed to *The Trace of the Butterfly* for the English translation.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the theory presented by Gloria Anzaldua, a feminist author and presenter of new mestiza theory, in her essay "How to Tame a Wild Tongue". She says: "People should be able to construct their own identity when immigrating to another country. They shouldn't have to give up their sense of self and their culture and language to feel like they can be successful in their new life." Anzaldua showed her concern with many kinds of borders, like national, cultural, class, gender, and language. For her talking bad about her language is like hurting her badly. She focused on themes like racism, sexism, identity creation, and low self-approval. This research is based on the victims of war who are facing an identity crisis and the effects of this struggle on their personality in the poetry collection of Mahmoud Darwish, *A River Dies of Thirst*.

Objectives

The researcher is aiming for the following objectives:

1. Refugees are the sole victims of the loss of their identity due to the effects of war. War has traumatised their personalities which they are trying to retrieve.
2. Refugees are struggling to identify their true identity and have lost their inherited culture. They are feeling alienated in their migrated country and their sense of uniqueness is vanishing with time. They are feeling death before the actual death.

Research Questions

The researcher is going to answer the following research questions:

1. Who are the victims of the loss of their identity due to the effects of war?
2. What are the effects of the loss of identity on refugees?

Significance

This research will highlight that when moving to another nation, an individual should be able to create his own identity. For him to feel successful in his new life, he shouldn't have to give up his sense of self, his culture, or his language. In any circumstances, whether a refugee or not, he/she should keep a keen sense of himself and maintain his inner person. People should humanely treat refugees or migrants and should show some sympathy to them. This research will help people to maintain their own cultural identity while being in another land.

Literature Review

There is not any clear research has been conducted on the poetry collection of Mahmoud Darwish's *A River Dies of Thirst*. But on the idea of identity crisis theorists and researchers have said a lot of things. In his book, Stuart Hall argues in his book "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", that identity is not always clear and transparent. He claims that culture is related to it and that it shapes the identities of immigrants. He also states that identity is a product that is always in progress. There are two ways to

understand it: first, it is a representation of one's culture and second, it is a combination of these. (Hall, 2015, pp. 222, 223). It entails both the past and the future. It's a long way from questions of location and time, as well as culture and history. It is about figuring out "who we actually are." as well as 'what we're becoming. Cultural identities are always a component of history because they originate from a historical moment. They do, however, go through a change and shifting process. They are no longer fixed as they once were; instead, they are constantly engaged in a game of power, culture, and history (225). It's not just about looking for or recovering a lost item that will protect an immigrant's sense of self and offer them a place in the past (225). Immigrants are constantly perceived as "outsiders" in strange places, and they struggle to shed their past identities and assume new ones.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson defines a nation as "an imagined political community and nation imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). A nation is imagined as any group which is larger than a small village because the majority of the citizens never meet face to face with one another, yet they give off the impression of belonging to a political family that has common roots, interests, and a strong sense of horizontal camaraderie. It is believed that the nation's borders are unambiguous and that it is the only country with legal authority within those boundaries (Anderson, 2006). The creation of meaning, according to Anderson, is one of nationalism's most significant impacts.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon states that identity is produced for black people. He claims that whites will always treat them inferior even if they become more intelligent (Fanon, 1986). This idea was designed to keep black people from attaining a higher status within a colonial order. They would try to imitate the culture of the colonizers by imitating their mannerisms and behaviour (Fanon, 1986). It is critical, according to Fanon, to recognise that Black people do not feel inferior by nature. Racism, which asserts that whites are superior to Blacks and provides whites with economic benefits, is to blame for this feeling. People are reduced to their race rather than being regarded as unique human beings. The only cultural depictions of Black people in European societies, according to Fanon, are inhumane. Instead of being persons with minds and feelings, they are mostly shown as bodiesso symbolized as the "biological" (Fanon, 1986, p. 124).

This research idea, which is taken from "How to Tame a Wild Tongue", is quite different from the above-mentioned ideas. This research depicts the concept of articulation, keeping the previous cultural identity of immigrants. Immigrants should not compromise their culture, identity and language to be acceptable by others. This idea has not been applied by any researcher to any poetry collection, but the researcher is applying this concept to the poetry collection of Mahmoud Darwish, *A River Dies of Thirst*.

Research Methods and Methodology

This research follows the qualitative method of study and falls under the domain of descriptive research design. Different databases had been used to collect the material for the literature review such as books and articles which fall under the domain of identity crisis, cultural studies, acculturation and psychoanalysis. The researcher utilized the material and presented the required research by describing the interpretations in the discussion analysis portion. This research is limited to the seven poems from the poetry collection of Mahmoud Darwish's "A River Dies of Thirst", which is taken as the primary text. The secondary sources for the research are some scholarly articles, journals and books.

Analysis and Discussion

Mahmoud Darwish is considered as a poet who purposely obscures limits among prosody and composition, formalism and free section. Writer Naomi Shihab Nye remarked on the sonnets in "Unfortunately It Was Paradise" that the style here is quintessential Darwish, it is melodious, imagistic, sad, tormenting, generally energetic, and rich. What's more, it was nothing not exactly free, what he would dream for every one of his kin. His poetry collection, *A River Dies of Thirst* is a great landmark in the history of refugee literature. This research is primely based on the seven selected poems, from this collection, which is: "The Girl/ The Scream", "If only I were a stone", "The Forest", "Two strangers", "How Far is Far", "A Person Chasing himself", "A River Dies of Thirst". In this collection, the loss of cultural identity is depicted nicely. As Mahmoud Darwish was a Palestinian poet and had faced difficulties being a refugee. He had the urge to help Palestinians, his native brothers. War has disastrous effects on everyone including children, which can be mental and physical (Betancourt, 2015). But it affects the refugees in a different dimension which is not physically but in the true sense more mentally. War By examination, there is less proof of how other types of mental pain (for example melancholy, tension) coming from post-as well as pre-movement stressors might influence the human way of behaving. This lag in the writing is striking given proof of the direct, backhanded relationship between unpleasant materials also, social circumstances post-relocation, and evacuee emotional wellness (Jordans et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2017).

To encounter the effects of war on the refugees, Darwish started his collection with the poem "The Girl/ The Scream". He talks about the girl who has a house near the seashore that house has two windows and a door. Then he starts depicting the war breakout by mentioning the sea as a warship and the girl fell on the sand and was saved by someone then she screamed "Father! Let's go home, the sea is not for people like us!" but her father doesn't reply and remains in his position because he is already dead, and there is blood everywhere and her scream is echoed everywhere on the sea shore but there is no one to listen, there is no one to report the incident to others then, in the end, an aircraft comes to bomb her house (Darwish, 2009, p.3). Taking into account these details of the war break out, the researcher is able to consider the mental trauma that the saved child/girl will have in her whole life. The effect that the traumatic scene implies on her is the loss of her conscious mind regarding her identity and her norms. Her heritage culture dies there. The saved child can be a refugee in her upcoming life or can be killed by the drone attack which is mentioned at the end. This poem depicts the war scenes so intensely that the reader can get the thrill and feel the horror which is going to give a trauma.

Darwish says "And in the sea is a warship having fun" highlighting the horror of war like a sea full of disaster but still having life inside it, this life can be evil or good. But majorly a life during the war is nothing more than watching a massacre and its only victims are the alive ones, refugees. The horror of war and its trauma cause a lag in the personalities of refugees so shallow that they lose their identity, their voice and culture in this poem poet says, "Her voice carries her higher and further than the seashore. She screams at night over the land The echo has no echo so she becomes the endless scream in the breaking news which was no longer breaking news." They lost their identity because in a new place they were not able to pursue their inherited culture as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o says in his book *Decolonising the minds* that those encounters are given over to the future and become the inherited reason for their further activities in nature and on themselves (Thiong'o, 1986). So, the future of refugees is based on their present which will carry out their cultural future.

In the poem, "If only I were a stone" Darwish tries to say that nothing can bother him if he was a stone. He had no history, no past, no memory. The only thing that will be done to him will be some creativity or art, he will be a sculpture in the room of someone or being practised by a sculpturer. Or he may be decayed by water. By personifying the stone to a person, Darwish tries to tell the feeling of refugees that are having a disastrous history and war trauma. He tries to say that being a person who is carrying a huge burden of past life is tougher than being a stone because all the disastrous sceneries make life tough for a survivor. That's why he says at the end of the poem, "If only I were a stone/ so that I could yearn for something!" (6). He tries to show the feelings of the refugees and the effects of war on them. They are carrying a burden over them, the refugees carrying the burden of those who remained behind, of those who are dying every day, of those whom they lost, of those who are living a pitiful life after becoming refugees. They are carrying the burden of their identity which is no more with them. In their new home, they are not accepted as natives, they are carrying the identity of refugees and living in another country where they cannot be the older ones anymore. They want to do something for their dying brother but cannot. They are searching for their true identity, their true selves but are unable to do so. Refugees are having a traumatic background of war and their present and future is having no identity or culture. That bothers them and that's why Darwish said that if only I were a stone because a stone has no feelings, no guilt but it holds its true identity and history.

In the poem "The Forest", Darwish is trying to express a dark point of the life of a refugee by representing the country, which accepted refugees, as a forest, he says "I couldn't hear my voice in the forest" because he has lost his identity, his rights of being a citizen of a particular country. He says he cannot say a single word when he sees the beast, the country who attacked his homeland, is no more in the forest, he cannot say anything to wolves, countries or people who are willing to refugees help, when he knows it can hear him and willing to accept his order, he cannot hear his voice until the forest is free from himself and its silence (10). This poem is a depiction of the life of a refugee who is free from terror but has a war inside himself because the world media is silent on his loss. He screams in front of the world but no one does anything, his voice is not audible to the world and he is struggling to regain the ability of his voice to be listened to. Refugees are screaming and struggling for their country but no one listens to them making them more miserable. Some have lost their identity as Palestinian and struggling to become new citizens of their helping county because they cannot carry out their inherited traditions and customs in their new homes. They are voiceless creatures who are living their life with the sympathy of others and if they try to speak their voice is not audible not even to them but also the world. They have lost their voice, and ideas, which means that they have lost their identity because they have lost their homeland. The homeland which provides them with their identity and culture is no more.

It is guessed and demonstrated that the past applied and experimental work incorporates past openness to war injury as well as post-movement everyday stressors as indicators of refugee psychological well-being (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). Darwish carried out this huge loss of mental health in his poem "two strangers", he says a person looks at the sky and sees stars looking at him, looks down and sees his grave looking at him, and when he sees a woman, she does not like him. In the end when he looks straight in the mirror a stranger looking at another stranger, his reflection (24). Majorly it is about a refugee who is no more the person he was before the breakout of war. He is the one who looks at everything to search for himself. He thinks everything asks him who he is and what he has become now. And he is in search of himself because he finds himself a stranger. The last line of this poem is the true depiction of identity loss. The refugees are not now aware of their true identities because trying to merge among their new fellow citizens they have lost their true identity,

their culture, their language, and their traditional values. And now they are the victim of chaos and internal conflict which no more allows them to move and act independently. They are finding an ending in every aspect of their life, everything they see looks odd to them because their inner peace is lost somewhere with their true identity. And without their identity and culture, the refugees are no more the true beings they were before the war.

The struggle of refugees to find their peace and identity is shown by Darwish in his poem "How Far is Far?", he says how far is far? How many ways to get there? We walk and walk but that place does not arrive. It is a mirage guide of the confused to distance water/ futile and heroic. We walk in the desert and become wiser but do not say: "because wilderness is perfection" (30). This shows how much the refugees are struggling to find their true identities, their struggles and hardships of their ways are making them wiser but they are still not able to get their peace and true identity back. Because they have lost their homeland and are in their new home the refugees are not recognised as the native ones. As the poem ends with the same sentence, "How far is far?" (30). This is a question for refugees themselves how far is the day when they will get back their old identity? When the day will come when they will be free from their identity crises and will be able to practice their inherited culture without having the tint of the new one.

The thrust of self-identity is more precisely shown by the poet himself in his poem "A Person Chasing himself". In this poem, a person is asking a question himself that is "If you were me/ I would say to you: 'Wait for me at sunset'" then he replied to himself that a stranger does not ask a stranger such kind of things. The woman standing nearby said that someone is talking to himself and at the end, this woman says that someone is chasing himself because the person is saying "You walked along your pavement indifferent and I walked behind you disconcerted and the sun set behind us" (34). Darwish is trying to say that the search for the self-identity of a refugee is a never-ending race because he always chasing his older self which is no more remaining inside him. The hole which is inside a refugee's heart is never going to be filled. It is all because of his emotions for his native brothers never let him move on to a peaceful life. A refugee never bears that he is living peacefully while his brothers who are living there are dying every day. His personality is like a river that is dying of thirst. Because the water of his new homeland is not nourishing his throat. It is all due to the struggles refugees are doing becoming part of the new one is tiresome. Being part of two different cultures is tough because the older one is always dominating and the newer one does not accept the older one dominancy.

As Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* says "The air of extremely durable frailty wherein the refugees exist is kept up by continuous attacks of foes" (fanon, 1967, p.279). Darwish explains this condition in the poem "A River Dies of Thirst", also the title of this collection, that a refugee's heart is like a river that has two banks and a heavenly mother who nursed it on the drops from the clouds and this river is moving slowly visiting different places, villages and tents, like a charming lovely guest and it brings oleander trees and date palms to the valley. It drinks the milk of clouds and the water of horses and flies to Jerusalem and Damascus. Sometimes it sang heroically. It is a river whose mother is now kidnapped and ran short of water and died slowly of thirst (36). This is all about the land of refugees and their condition. The refugees who took refuge in the neighbouring counties still love their land. they are the river whose one bank is their motherland and the other one is their helping countries but still, they are dying of the thirst for their motherland their true identity. The refugees have the dominancy of their older culture, of their other land, and still trying to be merged into the new country in which they migrated.

From the analysis of all seven poems, it is concluded that the struggles of refugees to become part of their new homeland is tiring because they could not be accepted by the native one and their whole life will be spent proving their loyalty to their new home. As said by Homi K Bhabha, "the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities is the grim prose of political and economic refugees" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5). Their efforts of being part of their new community cannot be denied easily. But the researcher's point is that it should not be like that a person, a refugee, should maintain their older self while immigrating to a new country. It will save them from an identity crisis and the loss of their inherited culture. As the concern of cultural studies is the process of reproducing culture through the structural control of subjects as opposed to their agency, and the approach is historical materialism (Morrow, 1995). But it is an idealistic situation because the reality is worth speaking which is the denial of the next country's community to immigrants. They do not accept them as themselves and always deny their presence as worthy natives and the government of that country is not willing to give them nationality easily. This urge to be accepted by the new country makes refugees change themselves and become part of their new country but it is not that much easy. To become a new man is all like forgetting the older one. "To make people enough enable to understand what was going on, especially provide them ways to thinking, strategies for survival and resources for resistance" (Hall, 1990, p. 22), is the researcher's major concern. Because the effort of becoming new makes them the other who is no more the older one and not the desired one. This other becomes a personality who is the victim of an identity crisis and chaos. This chaos is the reason which makes the other more others and refugees lost their true selves. The refugees become the victim of their war and loss their identity and their inherited culture.

Conclusion

In all seven poems, it is concluded that the refugees are the victim of the loss of their identity due to the effect of war and they are struggling to identify their identity and their inherited culture which has been lost. Their personality had been traumatised due to the horror of war. Now they want their identity, culture and norms back. But they failed to recover it because it is extinct for them. their struggle and urge are creating a hole inside them which is making them the victim of chaos and distress.

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