



THE COMPLEXITIES OF “FEAR” IN PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE LITERATURE: REVEALING ELEGY AS A DISTINCT THEME OF MAHMOUD DARWISH’S POETRY IN *QĀLA ANĀ KHĀ’IF*

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HISTORY ABSTRACT

Received 4/2/2025 Numerous studies of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry concerning Palestine elucidate exile, identity, nationalism, politics, and resistance. This study offers a fresh perspective on this gem by examining another theme of Darwish, specifically elegy, as expressed in the poem *Qāla Anā Khā’if*. A qualitative descriptive-analytical approach was utilised to investigate data from *al-Dīwān*, an official repository of Arabic literary works. The data was gathered by textual authenticity, translation, close reading, and categorisation. The poet's history and the socio-political setting of the poem are deemed crucial interpretive instruments that facilitate analysis. The data analysis concentrated on the poem's linguistic and symbolic frameworks, particularly examining repetition as a literary device. The findings indicate that Darwish intensifies the complexity of fear, which encompasses fear of self, home environment, situations outside the home, loss and damage, uncertainty and losing identity, and sounds of fear. Darwish's poetry articulates the psychological and social suffering of the Palestinian people via recurring motifs, transforming it into a multifaceted experience that encompasses both personal reflection and collective strife. The poem's imagery, illustrating domestic items, urban environments, and peacefulness, underscores the idea that terror is both an inward feeling and a communal experience influenced by external factors. This study's findings enhance the corpus of Darwish and Palestinian poetry scholarship by highlighting elegy as a central topic and characteristic of Darwish's work, alongside exile, identity, nationalism, politics, and resistance. This study solves a research gap by analysing current Arabic poetry's examination of psychological and socio-political themes, underscoring its significance in Palestinian resistance literature.

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INTRODUCTION

The situation and problems that occur in Palestine are among the important issues that are always echoed in Arabic poetry. The authors utilize these poems as social expression or media of resistance (Affan, 2018; Hasan et al., 2019; Wahyudi, 2022). One of the most famous Palestinian struggle poets of the 20th century, with a humanist reputation that is respected today, is Mahmoud Darwish (Zuhdi, 2020; Cohen-Mor, 2019). He used his poetry as a medium to resist colonization and fight for freedom for his homeland, Palestine (Eid, 2016; Alhumam, 2019). With the complexity of his thoughts and poetry, Darwish makes poetry a tool for fighting for socio-political justice in Palestine (Alhirthani, 2024). In isolation in a distant land, the poetic and political Darwish consistently voices the identity and nationalism of the Palestinian people and moves the political and resistance narrative to gain the sympathy of the outside world (Hamamra & Samra, 2022). Therefore, when reading Darwish's poems about Palestine, we will constantly be reminded of the issues of exile, identity, nationalism, politics, and resistance to colonization, which later also became a characteristic of his poetry.

As one of the important characteristics of Darwish's poetry, the issue of exile is a form of effort to protect the homeland from distant lands (Mahfoodh, 2021; 2022; Mohammad & Abdulaali, 2020). The tendency of the issues presented by Mahmoud Darwish is relevant to the Palestinian struggle, so that his writings can maintain and revive the struggle, even though he is in exile. No less important, he represents the struggle separately through his poems. As studied by (Ahamed & Risana, 2024; Akan, 2020; Almwajeh & Rababah, 2024), this reflects the Palestinian people who were forced to leave their homeland due to colonial pressure. Furthermore, research (Abdullah & Al-Sakkaf, 2021; Ahamed & Risana, 2024; Al-swmaeai, 2022; Atiya, 2023; Mukattash, 2016; Zikrah et al., 2022) shows that Darwish's poems also raise awareness of the identity of the Palestinian people by connecting identity and homeland. In a situation of loss of identity and alienation, Mahmoud Darwish creates a spirit through his poems so that those who feel colonized still maintain their identity as Palestinians (Badurais, 2021; Singh, 2023; Ababneh, 2023; Priwanda & Fanani, 2024).

Another character that is no less important in Darwish's poetry about Palestine is the issue of identity and nationalism. In this case, the eco-postcolonial perspective concludes that Darwish uses his poetry as a medium for voicing lost and alienated identities due to the loss of territory (Abdullah & Al-Sakkaf, 2021; Fawa'ra, 2019; Ahamed & Risana, 2024). Several previous studies have revealed that the themes of identity in Darwish's poetry, on the other hand, also play a role in affirming ownership of the homeland and constructing the identity of the Palestinian people (Hamamra & Abusamra, 2022; Atiya, 2023; Al-Swmeai, 2022). Darwish successfully explores identity in his poems to counter the Israeli occupation by exploiting lost identities and cultures as weapons of resistance (Mukattash, 2016; Zikrah et al., 2022; Even-Nur, 2020). The narrative of longing for the homeland for Darwish is a spirit that gives life to a sense of nationalism and anti-colonialism as a strategy to fight more peacefully and humanely (Alkahlan, 2023; Hyder, 2018). Even though it is thick with chauvinistic discourse that deepens racial conflict, Darwish succeeded in raising resistance among colonized subaltern groups (Masyitoh et al., 2025; Zeidanin, 2020). With such a significant contribution through his works, Darwish is considered one of the writers who played an essential role in shaping Arab national identity (Kamoliddinova, 2024).

In addition to exile, identity, nationalism, and politics described above, resistance is the main character of Darwish's poetry about Palestine. Many scholars say that

resistance is the basis and main idea of Darwish's poetry (Alkhatib, 2024; Dahmash, 2021; Dar, 2024). Several researchers reveal the role of Darwish's poetry as a medium of resistance through the assertion of ownership of his homeland and the idea of occupation of the Palestinian people (Alsyouf, 2024; Hyder, 2018; Jambak et al., 2024). Postcolonial and ecocritical studies have concluded that Darwish's ideas about metaphorical ecological resistance (ecoresistance) are powerful through the overthrow of colonial domination, the mainstreaming of traditional and national insights, and self-reflection (Al-Sakkaf & Tayeb, 2022; Kazmi, 2022; Talukder & Ali, 2025). Meanwhile, the findings of the historico-literary analysis conclude that Darwish's resistance poetry reflects an aesthetic depth combined with an understanding of history and politics inside and outside Palestine (Khan, 2021). Darwish strongly criticizes Israeli colonization and consistently advocates the importance of rewriting Palestinian history (Khan, 2021; Brenes & Guzman, 2023).

The above studies show that Darwish's poetry contains an optimistic spirit that revives and maintains the collective spirit. However, in one of his poems entitled *Qāla Aanā Khā'if* (Darwish, n.d.), there is a distinctive expression voiced by Darwish, namely *khauf*, which means 'fear'. This poem is not as optimistic as the others and is hypothesized to represent Mahmoud Darwish's elegy. This is because there is an expression that contrasts with the spirit of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, which rarely raises desperate laments and sounds of pessimism. In the research of (Mohammad & Abdulaali, 2020; Badurais, 2021; Singh, 2023; Ahamed & Risana, 2024; Hamamra & Samra, 2022; Fawa'ra, 2019) it was found that Darwish expresses fear because he is sick in exile, and the Palestinian people have insomnia because of many worries. However, behind these fears, there is no concrete use of the word "fear," every fear is always expressed with optimistic narratives, such as the spirit and strength from within.

Therefore, based on this phenomenon, it is necessary to examine the meaning of *khauf* in the poem *Qāla Aanā Khā'if*, because it contains a distinctive social expression. The new color of Mahmoud Darwish's elegiac representation is certainly unusual. This needs to be studied because the language of fear used is very clear, and no narrative contains the value of struggle in a concrete way. Then, the meaning of "fear" in this poem needs to be studied, because it could be just an emotional expression of the author or interpreted as fear in a more complex and physically immeasurable space. Moreover, the expression of *khauf* 'fear' through *ism* 'noun' and *fi'l* 'verb' is voiced with repetition (Darwish, n.d.). The repetition in the language of poetry or other literary works, according to studies of (Khasanah, 2023; Khadair, 2016; Sayed, 2017) has a more complex meaning as thematic emphasis, expression of depth of meaning, greater influence on readers, and can serve as a rhetorical function of irony.

To analyze the complexity of fear in the poetry, a stylistic approach is used to reveal the meaning of an author's linguistic choices in literary works. With a stylistic approach, it is relevant to uncover the complexity of fear that Darwish expresses through more concrete and emphatic language choices. According to the stylistic perspective, the meaning of fear with such language patterns can be interpreted on a large scale, such as lexical meaning, or more complex, but seemingly small, such as prejudice, worry, and so on (Sihombing & Rundjan 2019; Hidayatullah 2023). Therefore, this needs to be researched more comprehensively because Mahmoud Darwish's form of elegy is rare in his poetry, which certainly provides a message that is also complex. This research aims to uncover Mahmoud Darwish's new soul in literary research, and readers of Darwish can be more empathetic and critical in interpreting emotional expressions that seem common, yet are so complex.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research with a descriptive-analytical approach to describe the verses in depth and comprehensively, and analyze them in a broader context. The research data consists of the text of the poem *Qāla Anā Khāi'f* 'He Said: I'm afraid' by Mahmoud Darwish, obtained from *al-Dīwān*, a reputable digital archive dedicated to classical and modern Arabic poetry. The poems as a data source can be accessed online on the page <https://www.aldiwan.net/poem9685.html>. Although the site is recognized as a reliable source for Arabic literary texts, it does not provide detailed metadata regarding the publication date or the circumstances under which the poem was written. Likewise, no annotations, scholarly commentary, or user discussions accompany the text on the site. This lack of contextual and critical framing further underscores the novelty of this research, as no existing studies, at least to the best of the author's knowledge, have specifically analyzed this poem or explored its connotative meaning using a literary and semiotic framework. The absence of commentary allows for an unbiased analysis of the poem's internal structure, repetition, and symbolism, offering a fresh interpretive contribution to Arabic literary criticism.

For more details, below are the poem's verses and a translation from the researcher so that it is easy to understand.

Table 1. Text of *Qāla Anā Khāi'f* (Darwish, n.d.)

Translation	Original Text
<i>He is afraid. He says it loudly: "I am afraid."</i>	خافَ. وقال بصوت عالٍ: أنا خائف.
<i>The window is tightly shut, yet the echo returns, spreading everywhere: "I am afraid."</i>	كانت النوافذ مُخَكِّمَةً الإغلاق، فارتفع الصدى وأتسع: أنا خائف.
<i>He falls silent, but the wall speaks again: "I am afraid."</i>	صَمَّتْ، لكن الجدران رَدَّدَتْ: أنا خائف.
<i>The door, the chair, the table, the curtains, the carpet, the books, the candle, the pen, and the painting, all say: "I am afraid."</i>	الباب والمقاعد والمناضد والستائر والبُسُط والكتب والشموع والأقلام واللوحات قالت كُلُّهَا: أنا خائف.
<i>He is afraid to hear the voice repeating fear, and shouts: "Enough!" But the echo does not repeat the word: "Enough!"</i>	خاف صوت الخوف فصرخ: كفى! لكن الصدى لم يردِّد: كفى!
<i>He is afraid to stay home, so he goes onto the street.</i>	خاف المكوث في البيت فخرج إلى الشارع.
<i>When he sees the fallen pine tree, he fears looking at it without a clear reason.</i>	رأى شجرة حَوْزٍ، مكسورة فخاف النظر إليها لسبب لا يعرفه.
<i>A military vehicle passes swiftly, and he is afraid to walk the street.</i>	مرت سيارة عسكرية مسرعة، فخاف المشي على الشارع.
<i>He is afraid to return home, yet he must still go.</i>	وخاف العودة إلى البيت لكنه عاد مضطراً.
<i>He is afraid of forgetting whether the key is still inside, but he finds it in his pocket and feels calm.</i>	خاف أن يكون قد نسي المفتاح في الداخل، وحين وجده في جيبه اطمأن.
<i>He is afraid of a power outage.</i>	خاف أن يكون تيار الكهرباء قد انقطع.
<i>He presses the light switch in the stairwell, and it turns on, bringing calm.</i>	ضغط على زر الكهرباء في ممر الدرج، فأضاء، فاطمأن.
<i>He is afraid of slipping on the stairs and breaking the water reservoir, but nothing happens, and he feels calm.</i>	خاف أن يتزحلق على الدرج فينكسر حوضه، ولم يحدث ذلك فاطمأن.

<i>He inserts the key into the door, afraid it won't open, but it does, and he feels calm.</i>	وضع المفتاح في قفل الباب وخاف ألا ينفتح، لكنه انفتح فاطمأن.
<i>He enters the house and feels afraid because he has forgotten himself, bound by fear in the chair.</i>	دخل إلى البيت، وخاف أن يكون قد نسي نفسه على المقعد خائفاً.
<i>When he is sure that only he has entered, not someone else, he stands before the mirror, and when he recognises his face in the reflection, he feels calm.</i>	وحين تأكد أنه هو من دخل لا سواه، وقف أمام المرأة، وحين تعرّف إلى وجهه في المرأة اطمأن.
<i>In the silence, when he hears nothing saying, "I am afraid," he finally feels at peace.</i>	أصغى إلى الصمت، فلم يسمع شيئاً يقول: أنا خائف، فاطمأن.
<i>For reasons unclear...</i>	ولسبب ما غامض...
<i>He is no longer afraid!</i>	لم يعد خائفاً!

The data collection stages in this research were carried out through several systematic steps to ensure the accuracy and depth of textual analysis. *First*, the poem *Qāla Anā Khāi'f* was identified and accessed from the official Arabic poetry archive, *al-Dīwān*. *Second*, the poem was cross-checked for textual authenticity and completeness by comparing its content with other versions of Darwish's collected works, where available. *Third*, the researcher translated the entire poem into English to clarify lexical and semantic structures, especially concerning the repeated occurrences of the word *khauf*. *Fourth*, the researcher closely read each stanza to identify patterns of repetition, emotional tone, and symbolic elements. *Finally*, data were categorised based on contextual themes of fear (internal, domestic, external, and existential), which were then used as the basis for analysing connotative meanings within the poem. These steps ensure that the interpretation is grounded in the linguistic, psychological, and socio-political layers embedded in the poetic text.

The analytical method employed in this study is content analysis, focusing on identifying and interpreting the complexity of fear (*khauf*) within the poem. The researcher first translated the textual data into English to enhance lexical clarity and facilitate a more precise semantic interpretation. The analytical process involved data collection, close text reading, identification of repeated word patterns, and interpretation of emerging meanings. At this stage, the poet's background and the socio-political context of the poem are considered essential interpretive tools that support the analysis. Therefore, the interpretive framework incorporates the biographical details of Mahmoud Darwish and the historical context in which the poem was written. These elements help strengthen the understanding of how the poem's complexity of fear is constructed.

RESULT

Qāla Anā Khāi'f describes a person who is struck by deep fear. He expressed his fear out loud, but the echo of his voice strengthened his fear as if the objects around him, such as walls, doors, and furniture, were repeating his words. This fear continues to haunt him both inside the house and outside, such as when he sees a fallen tree or a military vehicle passing fast. Still, he went home, relieved when he found the keys in his pocket and reassured when the lights came on and the door opened. After entering, his fear was reduced when he was sure he was the only one who had entered and recognised his face in the mirror. In the silence without the echo of "I'm scared," he

finally felt at ease and was no longer afraid for no apparent reason. Overall, *Qāla Anā Khāi'f* portrays a series of fears, anxieties, and worries in “Him”, the figure narrated facing the chaos of the Palestinian situation in the poem. The complexity of fears Darwish explores in his poem can be systematised and categorised into the following points.

Fear of Self

Fear of self is related to the fear whispered by internal thoughts of anxiety and worry. This form of fear can be seen in the following excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

دخل إلى البيت، وخاف أن يكون قد نسي نفسه على المقعد خائفاً.
He enters the house and feels afraid because he has forgotten himself, bound by fear in the chair.

This fear originates from within, rooted in uncertainty about one's identity and emotional state. It reflects anxiety, self-doubt, and inner conflict. In this context, fear manifests as confusion. As implied in the lyrics, the subject's lack of awareness suggests that fear disrupts focus and decision-making, leaving one uncertain about how to act. The *house* is a metaphor for turning inward, a symbolic space where one confronts the hidden or suppressed parts of the self. Entering the house is a journey into the subconscious, where long-forgotten memories or fears reside. Within this space, the *chair* symbolizes emotional paralysis. It appears with the phrase *bound by fear*, reinforcing the idea of being trapped and motionless. A seated position implies passivity, being unable to move forward. The *chair* can also represent the part of the self left behind, still caught in past trauma or unresolved memory. Together, the house and chair form a metaphor for internal conflict: a character confronting a fearful, helpless version of themselves that had long been ignored.

Fear of the Home Environment

Fear of the home environment is a fear that arises when seeing objects in the house. This feeling of fear is reflected in the excerpt 2 as follows.

Excerpt 2

كانت النوافذ مُحَكَمَةً الإغلاق، فارتفع الصدى واتسع: أنا خائف.
صَمَتَتْ، لكن الجدران رَدَّدَتْ: أنا خائف.
الباب والمقاعد والمناضد والستائر والبُسُط والكتب والشموع والأقلام واللوحات قالت
كُلُّها: أنا خائف.
The window is tightly shut, yet the echo returns, spreading everywhere: "I am afraid."
He falls silent, but the wall speaks again: "I am afraid."
The door, the chair, the table, the curtains, the carpet, the books, the candle, the pen, and the painting, all say: "I am afraid."

Home, which is usually considered a place of refuge, is a source of fear. This fear arises from a closed home environment and everyday objects that should be familiar. This is proven by his daily worry about things he sees, such as household furniture. The choice of words window and door can symbolize self-isolation or alienation. The fear in

this poem appears to be trapped within a personal space, unable to escape, and even the voice of fear is reflected, creating a barrier between the internal and external worlds. Doors are often associated with change or transition, entering a different world. A door that says “I am afraid” could indicate a fear of change or uncertainty about what will happen when one steps outside their comfort zone. Other objects speak because the fear that overwhelms the character doesn’t only come from within, but also permeates all aspects of life, making everything affected and trapped in uncertainty.

Fear of Situations Outside the Home

Fear of situations outside the home is related to the fear of seeing situations, objects, and events outside the home. This fear is reflected in the following excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3

خاف المكوث في البيت فخرج إلى الشارع.
رأى شجرة حَوْرٍ، مكسورة فخاف النظر إليها لسبب لا يعرفه.
مرت سيارة عسكرية مسرعة، فخاف المشي على الشارع.

He is afraid to stay home, so he goes onto the street.

When he sees the fallen pine tree, he is afraid to look at it without a clear reason.

A military vehicle passes swiftly, and he is afraid to walk the street.

This fear is related to the outside world, which is full of threats and uncertainty. The above stanza depicts the fear permeating every aspect of the character’s life, both in private space and the outside world. The house, a symbol of protection, becomes frightening, reflecting feelings of being trapped or isolated. When the character goes outside, the fear does not diminish; he sees a fallen pine tree symbolizing damage or loss, but feels fear for no apparent reason, indicating an abstract and deep anxiety. This fear moves from inside to outside, from the house to the street. The presence of speeding military vehicles reinforces the sense of threat, symbolizing power and control, making the character feel helpless. These elements create an inner atmosphere filled with fear, as if the world around him, both inanimate objects and external forces, conspires against his peace.

Fear of Loss and Damage

Fear of loss and damage is related to the fear of losing or damaging particular objects. This form of fear can be seen in the following excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4

خاف أن يكون قد نسي المفتاح في الداخل، وحين وجدته في جيبه اطمأن.
خاف أن يتزحلق على الدرج فينكسر حوضه، ولم يحدث ذلك فاطمأن.
خاف أن يكون تيار الكهرباء قد انقطع.

He is afraid of forgetting whether the key is still inside, but he finds it in his pocket and feels calm.

He is afraid of slipping on the stairs and breaking the water reservoir, but nothing happens, and he feels calm.

He is afraid of a power outage.

This stanza illustrates the dynamic between fear and reassurance, that many of our fears do not always come true, but still affect the mind. It is a subtle depiction of everyday anxieties, which arise from small things, but are still real in their effects. The character experiences fear of things that seem trivial but are full of meaning. The fear of forgetting the key reflects the anxiety of losing control or access, something very human. A sense of reassurance arises when he finds the key in his pocket because he still controls the situation. Then the ladder and the fear of slipping reflect the fear of failure. The water tank, if broken, can represent a loss or “spill” of emotion. Then the fear of power outages reflects anxiety about darkness and uncertainty. But when nothing happens, there is a sense of relief that what is feared does not always happen. This creates a moment of calm, where he realizes that not all of his worries come true.

Fear of Uncertainty and Losing Identity

Fear of uncertainty and losing identity is related to the fear of uncertainty faced and the continuity of self-identity. This phenomenon is reflected in the following excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5 *وحيث تأكد أنه هو من دخل لا سواه، وقف أمام المرأة، وحين تعرّف إلى وجهه في المرأة
اطمأنّ.*
*When he is sure that only he has entered, not someone else, he
stands in front of the mirror, and when he recognises his face in
the reflection, he feels calm.*

This fear focuses on the uncertainty of one’s identity and existence. Peace is obtained when an individual can recognize himself, showing the importance of identity clarity to overcome fear. This verse describes an intimate moment when the character finally finds peace through self-recognition. After feeling afraid that “someone else” might come in with him, he makes sure that only he is there, then stands in front of the mirror. After experiencing a series of fears about the environment, objects, and possibilities that do not happen, the character finally faces himself. This shows that the greatest fear comes not only from outside, but also from within the feeling of being foreign to oneself. The mirror functions as a symbol of identity and self-awareness. The mirror becomes a medium for recovery and acceptance. Peace arises not because the world outside becomes safer, but because he can recognize himself amidst the shadows of fear. This implies that knowledge and acceptance of oneself are the true source of peace behind all threats.

Fear of Sounds of Fear

Fear of sounds of fear is related to the fear of voices that whisper the word fear. This situation can be seen in excerpt 6 as follows.

Excerpt 6 *خاف صوت الخوف فصرخ: كفى! لكن الصدى لم يردّد: كفى!*
*He is afraid to hear the voice repeating fear, and shouts:
“Enough!” But the echo does not repeat the word: “Enough!”*

This stanza depicts the climax of the character’s inner tension, a resistance to the fear that continues to haunt him. When he shouts “Enough!”, it is an attempt to stop the

cycle of fear echoing within him. This is an act of courage, a form of confrontation with the anxiety that is constantly present. However, the fact that the echo does not repeat the word “Enough!” indicates something more profound, that fear does not submit to will. This poem implies that fear has reached a point where it cannot be overcome simply by verbal rejection; it demands a more profound understanding, or perhaps acceptance. This stanza shows that although resistance is an important step, it is not the end of the struggle. The character must go deeper to not only fight the fear, but also understand, accept, and slowly let go of it with complete and calm awareness.

DISCUSSION

In the analysis of this poem, it can be seen that Darwish uses repetition of the word “*khauf*” ‘fear’ to emphasise the complexity and intensity of fear in everyday life. Starting from the form of the verb/*fi’l māḍī* (خاف/*khāfa*) 11 times and the actor/*ism al-fā’il* (خائف/*Khāi’f*) 7 times. This repetition creates echoes in the poem that reinforce the theme of deep and persistent fear. Additionally, Darwish uses metaphors and symbolism to describe fear. For example, tightly closed windows and echoing sounds indicate an inability to escape the fear. Everyday objects such as doors, chairs, tables, and books are also given voice, illustrating how fear infiltrates every aspect of life. However, in the end, Darwish highlights an impressive optimism that fear is not an eternal prison for the subject of this poem. When he was finally no longer shaken by the voice that whispered, “I’m afraid,” a change was felt within him, namely, a gentle flowing peace. Thus, this poem offers an important message: that fear is not the end of everything, and that it is possible to overcome daunting obstacles with inner calm and genuine courage.

More than individual stories, these poems expand their reach to reflect on broader social and political conditions. By exploring fear in-depth, Darwish indirectly opens the door to observations about a world filled with uncertainty and anxiety. The fear felt by the subject of this poem reflects the collective worries that society may feel amidst political pressure, economic instability, and uncertainty about the future. Thus, this poem is a work of art that arouses individual emotions and a social criticism that touches the reader’s conscience. It strengthens awareness of the human power to overcome fear and invites readers to reflect on our role in facing the inevitable challenges in life. The findings of this study underscore that the word *khauf* ‘fear’ in Mahmoud Darwish’s poem *Qāla Anā Khāi’f* undergoes extensive connotative diversification through its intensive repetition. The verbal form (*khāfa*) and nominal form (*khāi’f*) reinforce the layered expressions of fear, illustrating how repetition is a literary and psychological device.

Another significant finding of this research is the role of repetition in reinforcing psychological entrapment. The continuous echo of *khauf* in the poem mirrors fear’s inescapability in everyday life. The walls, doors, and inanimate objects in the protagonist’s home repeat his words, symbolizing how fear permeates even the most intimate and personal spaces. This aligns with trauma studies, which suggest that repetition in literature can reflect the persistence of psychological distress. Darwish’s deliberate structuring of the poem ensures that fear remains omnipresent, illustrating how deeply ingrained psychological experiences shape human perception and behaviour. This finding strengthens the results of previous studies that elaborate on the psychological pressure of the subject in Darwish’s poem, which is instrumental as a spirit of resistance against colonialism. This can be seen in the study conducted by

Ahamed & Risana (2024), Hamamra & Abusamra (2020), and Al-Sakkaf & Tayeb (2022), which analyses the themes of exile, identity, and resistance in Darwish's poetry.

This finding aligns with (Hidayatullah, 2023) and (Ahmad, 2021) theories on the role of connotations in literature, wherein words transcend their literal meanings to evoke broader emotional dimensions. However, this study advances prior research by demonstrating that Darwish's use of repetition is not merely an aesthetic choice but also functions as an existential and psychological echo. Through this, *khauf* becomes a fundamental part of identity, especially within socio-political contexts, a perspective that has been less explored in previous literary studies. One of the novel perspectives this study offers is the relationship between domestic spaces and fear. In Darwish's poem, the home, traditionally a sanctuary, becomes the primary source of anxiety. Windows, doors, and everyday objects transform into symbols of threat and alienation. These findings align with semiotic theories suggesting objects can acquire dynamic emotional meanings based on socio-cultural contexts. Darwish's portrayal of a home filled with fear illustrates the profound psychological impact of trauma, demonstrating how fear disrupts perceptions of familiarity and security. This insight enriches psychological approaches to literature by shedding light on how ordinary objects, within specific contexts, become vessels of emotional distress.

The poem moves beyond individual experiences to encapsulate collective anxieties within Palestine's socio-political landscape. The protagonist's fear is a microcosm of the broader societal struggles under occupation. This interpretation aligns with the arguments of Ahmed & Risana (2024), Mahfoodh (2021), and Mahfoodh (2022) that Darwish's poetry frequently reflects the collective suffering of Palestinian society. The word *khauf* in this context functions as a universal symbol, encapsulating the pervasive unease caused by war, displacement, and the erosion of cultural identity. This finding also aligns with various previous studies that analyzed Darwish's exile poems, regarding the psychological complexities Palestinian people face in exile (Abdullah & Al-Sakkaf, 2021; Akan, 2020; Mohammad & Abdulaali, 2020). This reinforces the idea that Darwish's work operates on multiple levels, addressing both personal and societal dimensions of fear and offering a layered narrative of oppression and resilience, as previously stated by Singh (2023), Fawa'ra (2019), and Jambak et al. (2024).

Despite the omnipresence of fear, the poem concludes with a subtle yet significant shift toward optimism. Initially trapped by his anxieties, the protagonist finds solace through confrontation and self-recognition. The realization that he is alone and that fear does not hold an objective power over him marks a transformative moment. Darwish's work implicitly conveys that fear, while deeply embedded in individual and collective consciousness, is not immutable. Bravery and self-awareness can lead to psychological liberation and a renewed sense of agency in confronting oppressive realities. This spirit and optimism in fighting oppression align with other researchers' findings regarding the resistance poetry composed by Darwish (Kazmi, 2022; Hyder, 2018; Dar, 2024). Reviewers tend to conclude that the spirit of ideological resistance that dominates Darwish's poems is always successfully combined with other themes that are realistic and contextual (Mahfoodh, 2021; 2022; Mohammad & Abdulaali, 2020; Fawa'ra, 2019).

This study can be enriched by comparing the findings of *Qāla anā khā'if* with other analyses of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry addressing the Palestinian conflict. As highlighted by Karim and Firdaus (2021), Alkhatib (2024), and Dahmash (2021), some of Darwish's poetry presents the oppression of Gaza, reflecting social suffering as a narrative of resistance. Similarly, *Identity Card* explores the loss of homeland and national identity under colonial rule, emphasising the biographical and historical trauma

endured by Palestinians (Fawa'ra, 2019; Priwanda & Fanani, 2024). In *Qāla anā khāi'f*, Darwish shifts to a psychological lens, illustrating how personal fear echoes collective anxiety through the repeated use of *khauf*, showing how fear transcends individual experience to symbolise existential dread under occupation. This aligns with El-Bagoury (2024), Alkahlan (2023), dan Hyder (2018), who interpret Darwish's work as envisioning postcolonial coexistence and shared humanity beyond conflict. Furthermore, Darwish's early poetic style, characterized by direct confrontation, evolved post-1967 into more introspective tones that still rejected occupation while engaging deeper questions of identity and exile (Mahfoodh, 2021; Mahfoodh, 2022; Ababneh, 2023; Abdullah & Al-Sakkaf, 2021).

The findings of this study have been contextualised through engagement with relevant literature on Palestinian conflict and poetry, particularly regarding the role of literature in articulating collective identity and national trauma. This finding can be linked to researchers who consider Darwish's poetry as a reflection of the pluralism of Palestinian identity and the importance of poetry's role in maintaining collective memory amidst conflict (Tang, 2022; Jackson et al. 2021; Abu Odeh, 2021; Kazmi, 2022). Therefore, this analysis does not stand in isolation but contributes to a growing scholarly dialogue that connects literary expression with psychological and geopolitical dimensions of the Palestinian struggle. This study complements and expands on previous scholarship by revealing how Darwish's literary use of *khauf* is a semantic device and a profound symbol of psychological trauma, historical dislocation, and national resistance, all woven into the poetic fabric of Palestinian struggle. Overall, it enriches Arabic literary scholarship and promotes cross-cultural dialogue on human emotions in the context of social and existential challenges, affirming the relevance of Darwish's poetry in contemporary discourse on fear, trauma, and resilience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion presented above, the researcher concludes that the complexity of fear in *Qāla Anā Khāi'f* is evidence of the existence of the elegy theme in Darwish's poetry. The fear of the subject in the poem, which is well described, is Darwish's attempt to describe the psychological and social misery of the Palestinian people. Although he has expressed this substance in many of his other poems, not many scholars have captured the elegy theme in these poems. Scholars tend to categorise these poems with the themes of exile, identity, politics, nationalism, and resistance. Thus, the results of this study present elegy as a distinctive theme to broaden Darwish's insight into Palestine's poetry, which is rich in various themes. This study has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it enhances the understanding of lexical meaning in modern Arabic literature by showing how repetition and symbolism express individual and collective trauma while addressing the psychological dimensions of fear in poetry. Practically, it offers insights for scholars and readers interested in Arabic poetry, providing a framework for analyzing themes of elegy in Darwish's work and other texts.

This research, which was designed from a semantic and stylistic perspective, has analytical limitations. This allows further researchers to elaborate on the object with other analytical features. For further research, several suggestions can be followed. *First*, conducting an in-depth analysis of Darwish's use of language and symbolism to convey fear, including metaphors, imagery, and rhythm. *Second*, conducting comparative studies with the works of other poets who deal with similar themes to gain a broader

perspective on exploring fear in literature from different cultures and backgrounds. *Third*, examining the influence of historical and cultural context on Darwish's work to understand how fear reflects his time's social and political conditions. *Fourth*, a psychological approach is used to enrich the analysis of the mental and emotional conditions depicted in this poem. By combining these various approaches, further research can provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of exploring the theme of fear in the poem *Qāla Anā Khāif* by Mahmoud Darwish.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author played a primary role in this research, including designing the study, collecting and analyzing data, drafting the manuscript of the scientific article, and translating the manuscript. The second author provided guidance and direction throughout the research process and offered critical feedback on the study.

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