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<h1>Representations of Mythical Characters in the Poetic Works of Mahmoud Darwish</h1>					
Larbiouis Lamisse		Doctor University of Oran 1 Ahmed Ben Bella Algeria E-mail: larbiouislamisse@gmail.com			
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Abstract <p>The contemporary cultural landscape has sparked a new discourse that has brought about a significant shift in our understanding of literature. It has enabled the formulation of expansive intellectual approaches with unprecedented perspectives and possibilities, transcending the limitations of classical thought. This shift aims to explore realms that can accommodate the latest artistic developments and their structural features. This has inspired the poet Mahmoud Darwish to engage with a heritage deeply rooted in history and culture, seeking to recreate the collective fantastical legacy. Darwish draws upon mythological elements within a created imaginary circle, imbued with all its semantic and suggestive connotations. These elements are thus incorporated into his contemporary poetic thesis, undertaking the responsibility of emotional and intellectual embodiment, aesthetic representation and the achievement of anticipated aspirations. The focus of this research paper is therefore to highlight mythical characters derived from ancient civilisations that are mentioned in Mahmoud Darwish's poetic discourse.</p>					
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Introduction:

Mahmoud Darwish's creative treasures allowed him to seize the opportunity to explore the realms of thought and beauty, setting him apart from conventional literary paths. This movement towards adopting unique compositional strategies, characterised by their modernity and distinctiveness, is expected to place him on the fringes of established norms, setting him on an extraordinary path of bold experimentation. This experimentation embraces a modernist philosophy that disrupts expectations and interpretations, revealing genuine echoes and dimensions in textual formulation. Drawing from a reservoir of artistic symbols and intertwined codes, it navigates the labyrinths of fantastical understanding, laden with mythological weight deeply embedded in collective anthropological consciousness.

Notably, Mahmoud Darwish has harnessed his full creative potential to seek transcendent experiences that transcend rational thresholds and logical reasoning. This endeavour takes him to boundless illusory worlds that accommodate the strange, the wondrous and the astonishing – worlds that undeniably captivate his artistic sensibilities. He draws on this mythical source for metaphysical characters that have long been a part of the intangible folklore of Hellenic and Mesopotamian cultures. He perceives a resonance in them with the concerns

and aims of his poetic projects and utilises them as an expressive means to convey imaginative messages in an aesthetically impactful format.

The current poetic experience merely reflects the fragmented historical Arab landscape, shaped by social and political failures and defeats. It uses archival material that evokes a fantastical allure and captivates the reader's imagination. Accordingly, this research paper aims to showcase the mythical characters inspired by Arab and Western mythology that are embedded in Mahmoud Darwish's poetic discourse. In this context, a central issue arises: How are mythical characters represented in the poetic texts of Mahmoud Darwish?

Concept of Myth:

Upon reviewing the theoretical material related to mythology, we noticed an overwhelming wealth of terminology reflecting the significant interest of scholars in both Arab and Western contexts. This necessitates a page of widely accepted definitions to dispel ambiguity and confusion. For example, in his work *Dictionary of Folklore*, Abdul Hamid Younis states that a myth is 'tales associated with a god, semi-god, or supernatural being that explain phenomena of life, nature, the universe, and social order, often leaning towards personification, representation, and analysis' (Younis, p. 34).

We can also refer to Muhammad Hussein Abu Al-Hassan's work, *Narrative Form and Heritage*, which aims to clarify the meaning of the term 'myth'. He defines a myth as 'a legendary story, usually of popular origin, depicting beings that symbolically represent the forces of nature or aspects of human genius and fate' (al-Hassan, 2012, p. 356). From a Western perspective, Ernst Cassirer viewed myth as 'a fundamental force in the development of human civilisation, through which humans express their interests and aspirations via its symbols' (Sida, 1995, p. 19).

The true essence of a myth, in its simplest form, is a narrative in prose or verse containing a religious theme related to higher and hidden powers, reflecting the knowledge, morals and thought processes of early humans (Association, 2009, p. 25).

Based on the above, it is evident that the term 'myth' has received considerable attention in prominent critical writings. Most researchers agree that it is an extensive narrative of astonishing phenomena, woven from pure imagination and deliberately inventing fantastical circumstances that are unrelated to reality. Myths belong to the folklore of peoples whose roots extend deep into ancient times, including the Sumerian, Canaanite and Greek civilisations, among others. In these myths, characters and supernatural entities play a crucial role, necessitating illusory beliefs that demand recognition in astonishing and credible guises. Often, these myths portray a hero who defies the laws of nature through miraculous feats, or a god or semi-god carrying a deeper meaning that is realised in the end.

The Use of Mythical Characters in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish:

1. Greek mythology:

A distant voice echoes here and there, drawing the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish into its fold. In fleeting moments, it transports him from emptiness to a historical abundance encompassing numerous achievements and vast amounts of data, compelling him to reflect on a past rich with impactful imprints. Here, he engages in a decisive encounter where the fervour of history crystallises and the products of the past materialise under the banner of a literary resurgence with the artistic legitimacy to explore the known and the unknown.

Darwish is often captivated by the idea of broadening his horizons to elevate the textual achievement in terms of both form and meaning. He uses a panoramic lens of modernity to capture ancient details that still preserve their essence and nature. This artistic stylisation can only be realised through flashes of thought and fragments of cultural knowledge.

Darwish is not insulated from delving into a legacy that the ancients surrounded with a halo of sanctity. He focuses on an investment strategy continually provoked by the wondrous entities and extraordinary aspects of past civilisations. This invites the summoning of prominent characters and their mythical backgrounds and mythological content within a poetic discourse reflecting contemporary implications and meanings far removed from conventional direct expressions.

It is unsurprising to witness the mythical sensibility asserting a remarkable presence, as it embodies 'a feeling in which contradictions converge, encompassing various themes, times, and places'. Once this convergence point is reached, one navigates the corridors of creativity, emerging only after acquiring a new rhythm in terms of content, time and place (Shāhin, 1966, p. 88).

Myth is never devoid of 'intense human emotions, feelings, perceptions and stances that encapsulate the essence of experiences and the past, and reveal the philosophy of human existence and early intellectual attempts' (al-Qemni, 2020, p. 21). In this context, it is important to note that Mahmoud Darwish displays great artistic courage by transcending the constraints of familiar conventions to explore realms that celebrate the richness of possibilities. This approach merges cultural experiences ranging from an Arab square to a Western Hellenic pasture. It moves from the immediacy of contemporary discourse to the historical use of myth and from realism to mythology.

A new poetic edifice is built by effectively utilising a heritage flowing with profound visions and concepts. Our poet tirelessly excavates the ancient Greek archive, the influence of which has endured for a long time. He draws from its urgent unrealities to acquire a cultural element that assumes a transcendent mythical form. This engages with a poetic theme that prioritises the spiritual over the human, as seen in the following lines:

'Odysseus was a knight,
In the house were loaves,
wine and blankets,
Horses and shoes,
And my father said once,
when he prayed on a stone,
He turned his gaze from the moon,
Beware of the sea and travel. (**Darwish, 2017, p. 382**)'

Upon careful reflection on the preceding narrative layers, we discover Darwessian brilliance, shaped by the legacies of the most illustrious empires at the height of the classical era in Greek lands. His poetry employs a technique of evocation directed towards a historical legacy casting irrational shadows in a fantastical context, enabling him to capture a renowned mythical character. This character then manifests in a poetic space built on fantastic art, transcending the familiar to explore the unknown.

Darwish successfully merges the past with the present, invoking Odysseus by name and granting him the highest level of contemporaneity as he assumes a leading role throughout the narrative. This begins with the first steps of weaving a highly intricate plot, which is then interrupted by a series of tragic events.

It seems that Darwish emphasises the presence of Odysseus, chosen from the mythological realm, to bring his dynamic existence to life and facilitate the transfer of his intricate details to the audience. The harshness of fate leads him into an unavoidable dark space where he is pursued by nightmares of calamity. Nevertheless, Odysseus does not renounce his past or abandon his homeland. After the fall of Troy, he chooses to return to Ithaca, but the journey is fraught with unforeseen obstacles. During this journey, he manages to avoid hardship, yet he still finds himself in an even harsher situation filled with sorrow and pain. This leads him into a whirlpool of wandering and fragmentation. After a decade of struggle, he finally finds a way back to his homeland to reunite with his loved ones.

Clearly, the poet of the Palestinian cause has chosen to build his poetic edifice with mythological elements that stir the imagination, touching upon madness and delirium and breaking through the barriers of silence completely. By invoking a mythical character, he reveals the tragic accumulation of Palestinian suffering over decades due to the painful reality of Zionism's policies of erasure and assimilation. This suffering continuously showcases the heinous practices of oppression, forced displacement and exile beyond national borders. Nevertheless, the hope of a real return remains, drawing parallels between the *Odyssey* and the current situation of Palestinians, who are facing mounting challenges and escalating crises while dreaming of returning to their homeland.

2. Canaanite mythology:

Imaginary Darwessian realms emerge within the folds of a poetic scene radiating aesthetic brilliance and artistic splendour. After breaking free from the constraints of rationality, the potential to balance heritage with the demands of the present has become apparent. This has reached extremes of literary innovation, establishing an unparalleled presence through deviation and the contradictions it imposes. The mythological ether and the essence of poetic expression are inseparable, flowing with all their realism, as the bridge of ideals remains inexhaustible in its significant connotations.

Mythical procedures were a comprehensive expression of the deep-rooted spiritual and aesthetic needs of contemporary Arab identity. Undoubtedly influenced by the efforts of Western poets, this attempt never stopped at their thresholds. Instead, it realised that the historical constitution of the Arab individual is better prepared to draw upon its mythical heritage (**Shukri, 1978, p. 139**). This is evident in the Palestinian poet, whose nostalgia seeks to capture characters whose mythical features are revealed against the backdrop of absolute dominance, both probable and improbable. This provides raw material that is sometimes ambiguous and sometimes effective.

Darwish's poetic permanence is achieved through artistic ties that justify shaping achievements within classical settings. These ties intertwine threads of delirium and imaginative connections, grasping the essence of invention while avoiding superficiality. This is accomplished by activating a symbolic energy that favours implication over explicitness. Indeed, the mythical character plays a pivotal role in shaping the meaning and structure of poetry, as can be seen in the following lines:

'So sing, my beloved goddess, O Anath,
My first poem about creation is secondary...
For the narrators may find the birth certificate
For the willow in a weathered stone, and they may find
The shepherds the well in the depths of a song.' Life

may come suddenly to those indifferent to meaning,
 from the wing of a butterfly that clings
 to a rhyme. So sing, my beloved goddess.
 O Anath, I am the outcast and the arrow.
 I am the word; I am the eulogist and the muezzin,
 And the martyr. (**Darwish, The Wall, 2001, p. 20**)^{*}

In these lines, invoking Anath enriches the text with mythical depth, connecting the contemporary struggles of the Palestinian experience with ancient narratives and weaving a tapestry of identity that resonates with the profound complexities of existence. These mythical elements provide a means of expressing the poet's sentiments, blending the historical with the personal and the spiritual with the tangible to create a poignant reflection of the human condition.

The verses mentioned above reveal a vibrant and dynamic train of thought that transcends the boundaries of time and moves towards a historical landscape teeming with ancient details. Here, the poet stands at the exceptional threshold of history, bombarded by astonishing inventions and strange beliefs that challenge the metaphysical. The Canaanite character emerges vividly, unblemished and destined to be woven into a poetic structure of excellence. In this context, poetry and myth 'meet in that both grant time a sense of permanence, allowing us to see the continuous present and the eternal future in the mythical and poetic'. Gradually, harmony is established between the present and the past (**al-Mal, 2011, p. 9**).

Upon reflection on the textual introduction, we encounter the ancient figure of Anath, who is viewed through a mythological lens as the Canaanite goddess of beauty, war, love and fertility. She presents a culture rich in symbolism and evocative imagery, drawing the audience's attention to the timeless debates that Mahmoud Darwish uses poetry to explore, reflecting the sanctity of Palestinian identity amidst a troubled reality filled with suffering and hardship caused by relentless attacks and ongoing oppression from the Zionist entity.

Undoubtedly, the poet of the occupied land skilfully exploits the extraordinary depth of the mythical character Anath in a contemporary poetic context that hints at pragmatism. This character repeatedly defies the modesty that might conceal her Canaanite femininity. She confronts the forces of death in her struggle to survive and rescue loved ones from oblivion. Through poetic imagery, she suggests the rebirth of Arab identity from the ashes of destruction and ruin. This offers a glimmer of hope against a backdrop of despair, and is a testament to the indomitable spirit of Palestinian and Canaanite identity, deeply rooted in ancient historical landscapes.

Anath embodies challenge and resistance, refusing to abandon her Palestinian identity. Through sacrifice, she seeks to break the power of the most brutal entities and reclaim the stolen homeland. Here, the most intense moments of loss and destruction intertwine with efforts to achieve salvation from the darkness of the siege.

Notably, Mahmoud Darwish has embraced the demands of modernity, rejecting rigid templates to select options that fill existing gaps. This briefly transports him to the 'ever-springing fountain of values, the truest and most enduring' (**Zaid, 1997, p. 9**), upon which he builds his new poetic present on the strongest and most stable foundations. This impregnable fortress grants him safety and tranquility whenever storms rage. Thus, our poet seeks to embody a character who moves powerfully within mythological spaces and takes on a mission-driven role. This is illustrated in a notable poem that merits careful attention, in which he writes:

'There is no death there, and... no life.

My poem is the foam of breath and the scream of the animal.

when it rises high

And when it rises bare.

I want you both together: love and war, O Anath. (**Darwish, Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?, p. 87**)

Evident from the previous poetic excerpt, the poet Mahmoud Darwish is not isolated from the rich historical heritage offering vibrant scenes shaped by cultural irrationality, which he displays to the public in his delirium and madness. Celebrating imaginative forms that defy rational boundaries, he aims to give prominence to the most prominent mythical motifs of previous civilisations, which quickly harmonise with the magic of poetic language to create a realistic narrative that captivates with its wonder.

Clearly, our poet is deeply connected to the legacy of his ancestors; he is considered an important reference point for poems worthy of the masterpieces of fantasy that align with his objectives. Unsurprisingly, he skilfully exploits ancient mythology by invoking a renowned Canaanite deity. Each goddess symbolises an idea, emotion or force of existence, and each myth is an intriguing poetic image that researchers feel is born from powerful imagination and overflowing sentiment, encompassing the world and sensing life's finest nuances. Just as they created a god for love and a goddess for beauty, they also created a goddess for wisdom and gods for poetry and music. To encapsulate these profound meanings and the wonderful manifestations of the universe, they created spirits and life that feel and sense, viewing existence through the artistic perspective of their myths, sensing the current of life flowing through everything and stirring in every being (**al-Shabbi, 1961, p. 40**).

From what has been discussed, it is important to note that Mahmoud Darwish has dared to draw on his experience to create the mythical character of Anath from Canaanite heritage, which spans ancient history. We can assert with certainty that her presence is not coincidental, but rather carries significant responsibility. She artfully concludes the poetic statement after the poet has allowed her to embody his visions and perceptions. This transition is graceful, employing a language of symbolism that generates numerous signals for the audience to dismantle and uncover the concealed truths layer by layer.

The character of Anath reveals the depth of Palestinian history, with its Canaanite roots dating back to the Bronze Age, exuding unparalleled authenticity and heritage. The Zionist narrative has claimed its falsity since 1948, yet it reveals a passionate and rebellious nature, embodying contradictions. This is an expression of a feeling that manifests itself in passionate, struggle-driven poetry, serving as a mythological mirror that reflects a feminine existence which fights without yielding, engages without being defeated and offers loyalty to the homeland without retreating.

Sumerian Mythology:

It is no secret that the poet of the occupied land, Mahmoud Darwish, has, through his poetic brilliance, managed to stand at the threshold of a rich heritage encompassing much. Drawing inspiration from the most exemplary sources, particularly a character from the extraordinary Sumerian civilisation, he allows it to take centre stage in his poetic texts, shedding light on the depth of his connection to historical origins and articulating contemporary experiences through metaphor, based on a concentrated intellectual and cultural foundation. This is clearly evident in the following lines:

How much time

has passed since we discovered the twins: time
and natural death, synonymous with life?"

And yet we still live as if death eludes us,
For we, who are able to remember, are capable
of liberation, following in the footsteps
of the green Gilgamesh, passing from one age to another...

Complete dust of creation...

Absence breaks me like a small water jug. (**Darwish, New Works, 2004, p. 512**)'

Building on the aforementioned lines of poetry, we can conclude that our poet is deeply haunted by the desire to draw upon and benefit from the sources of an ancient life brimming with cultural contributions. This takes us into a vast, fantastical realm grounded in 'non-logic, the absurd and timelessness' (**Zaki, 1975, p. 115**). This realm boasts astonishing wonders that emerged from the ancient land of Sumer, with a deeply rooted history extending back thousands of years. It stands as a silent witness to the fragmentation of a legendary dream. Here, it establishes its intellectual edifice and solidifies its philosophical foundations under the presence of the heroic figure of Gilgamesh, who assumes unparalleled leadership and dominance in Mesopotamian heritage. Like the king of the earliest epics, he strides along the paths of the unknown and mysterious in search of the eternal and impossible, until he experiences the bitterness of loss at the departure of his companion, Enkidu.

Based on this, we can conclude that the icon of Palestinian poetry draws us into this striking mythological narrative, revealing Mahmoud Darwish's existential anxiety and his stance on the dialectic of beginning and end, existence and non-existence, and permanence and transience – dualities governed by an inescapable, fateful necessity. This clarifies the ambiguities surrounding his existential concerns by presenting a narrative in which the history of suffering repeats itself from ancient times in a struggle for survival. It unveils the wounds of loss, fracture and human devastation that our poet shares with the knight Gilgamesh.

Conclusion:

Several key conclusions have emerged, which can be summarised as follows:

1. The conditions of modernity have led poets to become preoccupied with renewal and experimentation. This is likely to alter their artistic direction, aligning it with postmodernist ideas that prioritise elevating poetic language by exploring diverse aesthetic systems. This aims to resonate with profound meanings and implications, intensifying rebellious stances that deviate from superficial and formulaic approaches. This establishes creative uniqueness capable of encompassing genuine significance, semantic movement and aesthetic embellishment.
2. It is worth pausing to consider the fact that the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish shares a momentum of artistic renewal with his contemporaries by consciously immersing himself in the geographies of difference. This opens the door to current options and contradictions that diverge from traditional intellectual lines and align with contemporary cognitive standards. This enables a profound exploration of ancient mythological narratives, interrogating the cultural structures that legitimise the use of Greek, Sumerian and Pharaonic mythological elements. Inspired by folk imagination, this poetic work intertwines the present with the past, reality with illusion

and meaning with beauty, under the concept of poetic mythology, which arises from the interplay between actual significance and illusory content.

3. Mahmoud Darwish, the poet, has embraced an atmosphere of non-logic and absurdity, celebrating the wondrous and the absurd. He transcends the limits of time and space. This enables him to unleash his imagination and engage with mythological references and artistic inspiration from mythical entities in the realm of fantasy. He transforms these into a contemporary poetic endeavour in which his convictions, ideologies and reflections on his identity as a Palestinian and an Arab, along with their associated pain and hope, are subtly interwoven. This distinctive Darwessian feature elevates his poetic output to a level of excellence, offering open readings and diverse interpretations that stimulate critical engagement.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based solely on textual, literary, and theoretical analysis of published poetic works and secondary academic sources. No human participants, personal data, or experimental interventions were involved. Therefore, ethical approval was not required. The research adheres to accepted academic integrity standards, proper citation practices, and respect for intellectual property in accordance with COPE guidelines and international research ethics norms.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest. The author has no personal, academic, or financial relationships that could be construed as influencing or biasing the content of this research.

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