Maḥmud Darwīsh: A Revived Sufi or a Sufi Reviver?1

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Abstract
This paper will discuss the mask of Farīd Ed-Dīn Al-ʾAṭṭār as portrayed in the poetry of Maḥmud Darwīsh with the aim of studying the concatenation between the Sufi mask and intertextuality, and between poetry and meta-poetry.

To be more specific, this paper will investigate are some questions: Why did Darwīsh wear the mask of Al-ʾAṭṭār? Was it a mere fondness of an influential ancestor? Was it an act of protest against severe spiritual and intellectual deficiency and poverty which modern Arab literature suffers from? Was Al-ʾAṭṭār simply used as a Sufi mask, or as a signal of intertextuality? Did Darwīsh intend to pay homage to an ancient ancestor without whom he could not live his present and lead a successful struggle? In other words, did Darwīsh intend to resurrect Arab poetry and its revolutionary spirit by using Al-ʾAṭṭār’s heritage? If so, is Al-ʾAṭṭār a revived Sufi living among us to guide in person the battle for freedom and to promote the level of Arab literature? Or was Darwīsh given life by Al-ʾAṭṭār, the Sufi saint?

Keywords: the Sufi mask; intertextuality; meta-poetry; Al-ʾAṭṭār’s heritage; modern Arab poetry and Maḥmud Darwīsh’s poetry.

1. All quotations from Arabic sources including poetry, which appear inside the text in addition to the titles of these sources, were translated to English by the writers.
This paper will discuss the mask of Farīd Ed-Dīn Al-ʿAṭṭār as portrayed in the poetry of Mahmūd Darwīsh with the aim of studying the relationship between the Sufi mask and intertextuality, and between poetry and meta-poetry.

Despite the gap of time that separates Darwīsh from Al-ʿAṭṭār, they both share a lot of common points. Both were exposed to oppression by the ruling authorities. As a result, they led a life of bitter struggle using the weapon of poetry. More important, they came across the revolutionary ideas and practices of Sufism, which endowed them with an ever-flowing river of mystic thoughts and power to continue their fight.

Moreover, both were celebrated as great and well-known poets. They left a rich legacy whose impact was so profound, wide and everlasting that it transcended their own culture and time.

Al-ʿAṭṭār (1145/46–1221) was a Persian Muslim poet and theoretician of Sufism from Nīshāpūr. While practicing the profession of pharmacy, Al-ʿAṭṭār had the chance to meet scores of customers and listen to their stories which affected him deeply. His Sufi activities and ideas turned him into a very influential figure. Following the Mongolian invasion, Al-ʿAṭṭār used his influence to sway people against the foreign invaders. Consequently, the Mongols slaughtered him along with the people of Nīshāpūr, his native city, in April 1221 when Al-ʿAṭṭār was 70.

Upon his death, he left an interminable inspiration on Persian poetry and Sufism. Although he was not well known as a poet during his own lifetime, his greatness as a mystic, a poet, and a master of narrative was discovered only in the 15th century (Reinert, 20-25). His works were the inspiration of poets in the past like Ar-Rūmī and in our time like Mahmūd Darwīsh, whose leftist politics got him into trouble. Like Al-ʿAṭṭār, Darwīsh was fated to struggle against occupying forces rather than anational authorities. After the establishment of Israel, Darwīsh led a life of imposed exile, which paradoxically helped to ignite his poetic flame. He found out that through the medium of poetry, he could launch a successful struggle against his oppressors. His works turned him into a Palestinian symbol, a spokesperson for Arab opposition to Israel. In 1988, his widely spread, defiant poem “Passers-by in Passing Words,” was cited in the Knesset by Yitzhak Shamir, then the prime minister of Israel, who accused Darwīsh of asking the Jews to leave Israel. Yet, Darwīsh rejected all claims that he hated Jews. “It’s not comfortable that they show me as a devil and an enemy of Israel. I am not a lover of Israel, of course. I have no reason to be. But I don’t hate Jews” (Imloli, http://EzineArticles.com).

After the failure of the Oslo Agreement, Darwīsh moved more critical of both Israel and the Palestinian leadership. Still, he never lost hope. “I do not despair,” he told the reporter of Haaretz Magazine. “I am patient and am waiting for a profound revolution in the consciousness of the Israelis. The Arabs are ready to accept a strong Israel with nuclear arms - all it has to do is open the gates of its fortress and make peace” (Karpel, 12/7/2007).

Although Darwīsh is widely considered as the voice of his people and is also applauded as the “savior of the Arabic Language” (Saith, 2005 28-29), his work attains a universal recognition primarily because it “contains a universality born from specific suffering that reaches across the boundaries of language and nation” (Mena, 2009 111).

Both poets led a nomadic life. After abandoning his pharmacy store, Al-ʿAṭṭār traveled widely to Kufa, Mecca, Damascus, Turkistan, and India, meeting with Sufi sheikhs with the view to promote Sufi ideas (Bashiri, 2002). Correspondingly, Darwīsh moved from one place to another: from his native village, destroyed in 1948, to Deir Al-Assad, from his homeland to exile and while in exile he lived in the capitals of numerous countries, settling in Cairo, Beirut, Paris, Amman, Tunis, Moscow, and finally Ramallah. Yet, there are profound differences in the two forms of nomadic wandering: Al-ʿAṭṭār's traveling is for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, while Darwīsh’s is obligatory. It was imposed upon him.

In their works, both poets refer to materials and figures from within and outside their own culture. In explaining his thoughts, Al-ʿAṭṭār employed data from older ascetic legacies instead of depending on strict Sufi sources. He introduced stories from historical records, volumes of tales, and all sorts of well-regarded literature. Still, he viewed the ancient Aristotelian legacy with cynicism and incredulity and so he made use of pagan ideas only in the context where the theme of a story dictated it.

Similarly, the works of Darwīsh are full of references to contemporary and ancient writers, philosophers, poets and politicians the world over. Darwīsh cited Rimbaud and Ginsberg as literary influences. He even admired the Hebrew poet Yehuda Amichai, whose poetry was described by Darwīsh as a “challenge to me, because we write about the same place. We share a lot of common points.” Darwīsh grew in Deir Al-Assad, a village established by Sheik Muhammad Al-Assad Al-Jilānī, descendant of the Sufi ʿAbdel Qādīr Al-Jilānī of Baghdad. Yet, Darwīsh was not a devout Muslim or a Sufi practitioner.

Still, there are some questions to be answered in this paper: Why did Darwīsh wear the mask of Al-ʿAṭṭār? Was it a mere fondness of an influential ancestor? Was it an act of protest against severe spiritual and intellectual deficiency and poverty which modern Arab literature suffers from? Was Al-ʿAṭṭār simply used as a Sufi mask, or as a signal of inter-textuality? Did Darwīsh intend to pay homage to an ancient ancestor without whom he could not live his present and lead a successful struggle? In other words, did Darwīsh intend to resurrect Arab poetry and its revolutionary spirit by using Al-ʿAṭṭār’s heritage? If so, is Al-ʿAṭṭār a revived Sufi living among us to guide in person the battle for freedom and to promote the level of Arab literature? Or was Darwīsh given life by Al-ʿAṭṭār, the Sufi saint?

Farīd Ed-Dīn Al-ʿAṭṭār as depicted in Maḥmūd Darwīsh's Poetry

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Mahmud Darwish is a literary find: at once critically acclaimed as one of the most important poets in the Arabic language, and cherished as the voice of his people. From the chronological perspective throughout the Arab world, Mahmud Darwish belongs to the second generation of post-modern poets. On the artistic level, Darwish and other Palestinian poets of his generation are considered pioneers who have established a phase whose major poetical preoccupation is the issue of resurrection. These poets have been obsessed with reform in meter and topics reflecting deep sense of patriotism (Ash-Shonatei, 1981 139-155).

In the poem depicted in this paper, Darwish has depended on his ancestral legacy to create his poetical images. Seeing that his bitter life in exile is characterized by total loss of homeland, identity and culture, he turns to poetry for redemption. He believes that through poetry, if derived from the genuine legacy of the ancestors, he can redeem the Palestinian character and maintain the Palestinian heritage as a whole (Ad-Deek, 1995 76). In this long poem, “The Hoopoe,” he says,

We have not yet come close to the land of our far sta. The Poem takes us
Through the eyes of our needle to weave for space the horizon’s new cloak.
Captives (we are) even if our Speaks of wheat jumped of the walls and the swallow emerged
Through our broken shackles; we are captives, we don’t love, don’t want and shan’t be…
5 But in us, there is a hoopoe dictating in the exile’s olive tree his mails.
Our letters returned to us from our letters in order for us to write newly
What the rains write of primitive flowers on the rock of the distant.
.....
I am a hoopoe, said the guide to the master of things, I look for a sky which has gone astray.
Nothing was left of us in the wilderness other than what the wilderness usually finds
10 Of us: the reminders of the skin above, the prickles the song of the fighter about the houses
And the space’s mouth. In front of us are our remains. And behind us are the shells of the playfulness.
"I am a hoopoe,” the guide said to us and flew with the rays and dust.
Where did he come to us? The sages ask about the meaning of the tale and the departure.
.....
"I am a hoopoe,” the guide said, "I will find the way to the spring if the plants get dried."
15 We said to him, “We are not birds.” He said, “You will not reach Him. All belong to Him
And all are in Him and He is in all. Look for Him to find Him in Him for He is in Him.”
We said to him, “We are not birds so that we can fly.” He said, “My wings are my time
And the passion is the fire of passion; so get burned to rid yourself of the place’s body.”
We said to Him, “Have you returned from Saba’ to take us to a new Saba’?”
...
20 Oh, Hoopoe of the words when you hatch the meaning and from the language the birds abduct us!
Oh son of tension when the butterfly splits from its own elements and is inhabited by the feeling.
Here dissolve our clay so that a light will crack the image of things!
Soar so that the distance between what we were and what our recent present will be will clarify.
We go away and we approach our reality and our estrangement’s walls. Our obsession is the crossing.
25We, the twins, the sky- the earth, and the earth- the sky. And around a wall after a wall after a wall
What lies behind the wall? He taught Adam the names to open the great secret
And the secret is our journey to what is secreted. Indeed, the people are birds that do not fly.
...
"I am a Hoopoe,” the guide said, “and beneath us is the Noah’s flood. Babylon.”
.....

2. We translated only parts of the poem that deal with the major topic of this paper.
Oh, the hoopoe of secrets! Strive to what we can watch in the beloved our beloved;

30It is an eternal journey to look for the trend of the One having no trend.

... 

Take us, therefore, oh hoopoe of the secrets, towards our annihilation via His annihilation. Fly us, Land us so that we can bid farewell the mother who waited ages for our horses, So that the bulk of light will die or a widow will live for Nīsāpūr, who will decorate our night, She (wants nothing from the God – Allah except Allah). Take us!

35And the love is that the beloved is never attained. A lover sent to his lass
The horse of absence on the echo of clarinets and shortened the road: “I am her” And she is the “I” sneaking from hopelessness to a hope that returns to me as hopelessness. My roads do not lead to her doors. My “I” flew and “There is no I but I.” .... “I am a hoopoe,” the guide said and he flew from us. The words flew-

40But our journey to amnesia has become long and the veil ahead covered the veil. Perhaps the midway is the road to a road of clouds And perhaps we, oh hoopoe of secrets, are ghosts looking for ruins. He said, “Abandon your bodies to follow me and abandon the land- the mirage. To follow me, and abandon your names. Do not ask me about an answer!

45Indeed, the answer is the road and there is no road except vanishing in the fog;” “Did Al-‘Attār haunt you with his poetry?” We said. He said, “He addressed me and vanished In the belly of the Valley of Passion.” “Did Al- Ma‘arrī stand next to the Valley of knowledge?” We said. So he said, “His road is of frivolity.” We asked, “And Iben Synā… Did he answer The question and did he see you?” “I see through the heart not through philosophy.”

50 “Are you a Sufi, then?” “I am hoopoe. I do not want. I want Not to want.” .... Hoopoe of the secrets! Hang our time above the range of vision! Soar us! Indeed the nature is all a soul, and the earth looks from here

55A bosom for that big tremor.... .... “I am a hoopoe,” the guide said and we said, “We are a flock of birds, The words straitened to us we to them out of thirst and the echo expelled us. And until when shall we fly?” The intoxicated hoopoe said, “Our destination is the vision.” We said, “What is behind it?” He said, “The vision is behind the vision is behind the vision.”

60We said unto you, “We got tired.” He said, “You will not find a pine tree to rest. In vain Will you request landing. So soar in order to soar.” We said, “Tomorrow We will fly again. For that land is a mature bosom sucked by these clouds.” .... So fly! Oh birds in the yards of this heart! Fly! And gather around our hoopoe and fly...in order to... fly!
This lengthy poem, which appears in Darwish’s *I see What I Want*, is rich with vague meanings, confusing references, connotative diction, advanced structures, figurative language, Sufi implications and types of intertextuality drawn from the content which the poet deals with and the messages which he intends to convey. Aware of the ambiguity of his poem, Darwish says that ambiguity is the lane that leads to clarity. In his opinion, the goal of poets is not the search for uncertainty or indistinctness. Rather, the poets seek to attain lucidity. Darwish maintains, like every other poets, I wish to be understood by people. The dream of poets is to write poetry which is as simple as bread and as clear as all obvious phenomena. This ambition is legitimate and real. We must always seek to be really more understood because the poet’s goal in the long run is not the search for enigma but the arrival at plainness through the road of enigma which is a trend of the poetical work. Still, vagueness is never an end (Al-Harub, 2004).

What Darwish says is indication that the quasi-Romantic diction of his early works is traded in for a more personal, flexible language. Besides, the mottos and declarative language that featured his early poetry are exchanged by indirect and apparently apolitical declarations, although politics is never abandoned. More important, Darwish does not intend to give his reader the role of a passive recipient who is detached from the events being described or disengaged from the intellectual discussions being held. Rather, his reader plays the role of an active participant in the poetical experience as well as in the content of the events described.

Still, for the purpose of clarity, it is necessary to restate the meaning of the poem in simple prose, to decode its Sufi terms and to clarify the forms of intertextuality used.

This poem talks about the journey of a flock of birds which starts from the eye of a needle towards the God of birds, the Simurgh, represented by “our far star.” Both the starting position and the destination are places associated with feats that are too difficult to be attained. In fact, the whole journey is coupled with difficulties, problems, questionings and moments of hopelessness and tiredness. At the outset of the journey, the birds recognize the need for a guide. After serious arguments, they agree on the hoopoe known for his wisdom and expertise as their guide and protector. The road to the Simurgh, the God of the birds, is harsh and rife with hazards and fears. Furthermore, the birds have to pass seven barriers. Each is more dangerous than its predecessor. Once they pass one barrier, they encounter more veils and darkness. As a result, the birds fall victims to uncertainties and they fear their progress is futile. While crossing the Valley of Passion, they wonder if it has even been crossed. The hoopoe reassures his group that he will find the source of water in case the plants become dry and affirms that despite everything, he will try to cross the seven valleys. Towards the end of the journey, the hoopoe provides his group with hope and optimism. He asks his group to continue flying and to give no mind to obstacles until they reach their goal.

Doubtlessly, the poem offers a variety of interpretations. It can be claimed that the central purpose of the poem is the achievement of the Palestinian dream: to return home from the Diaspora and establish an independent state. This dream which is too thorny to be accomplished in reality can be achieved by means of poetry. This is the only available way for the speaker’s group (the flock of birds) to enjoy peace and freedom following the example of peoples the world over. In the present time, their life is an exile or a forced expulsion outside Palestine and, in consequence, they will be considered as captives until they manage their desire.

Therefore, what keeps the speaker and his group hopeful is the presence of a guide (the hoopoe) among them. Writing from his place in exile about the birth of the new and free home, this guide (the hoopoe) will lead them to their inevitable redemption. So after having lost faith in people who can fight for their cause, the group have great expectations from this poet/guide who is going to let the voice of this dispersed people be heard all over the world. This is why the group described in this poem ask the poet/guide to speak loudly so that everybody can hear him and realize their just cause. Yet, the birds have their own doubts and questions. They wonder whether they are doomed to fly in the sky of their exile awaiting salvation and whether they are fated to walk along a road full of one mirage followed by another.

Likely though this interpretation is, other alternatives will also be discussed. But first there is a need to explain the Sufi terms. The hoopoe, to start with, is a very clear Sufi symbol which draws on King Sulaimān’s hoopoe mentioned in the holy Qur’an.3 This symbol was endorsed by the Sufi doctrine especially Al-`Attār to tell about straightforward Sufi saint, master or *Sheikh* who can lead the Sufi practitioner on the path to God (Al-Athmah, 2000 40).

Another Sufi term employed by Darwish is “passion,” which is an eminent rank in the various stages on the way to God. Such an exalted position is attained by *sheikhs* and desired by novices (Qassem, 1970, 456-470; Nicholson, 1953 102-105; Helminski, 1999 52-55).

The “drunkard” is also a Sufi term evoked by Darwish. Ibnul-`Arabī defines intoxication as the accomplishment of what is absent through a strong flow or *wārid*. He adds, “Intoxication goes beyond the accomplishment of absence since the drunkard may not be pleased, if he is not fully intoxicated. Intoxication is confined only to people having profound passion. And intoxication means the illusion of the self-annihilation while preserving the traits. This is the *tijāb* (veil) itself” (1997, 316).

“The One in all,” is a clear Sufi expression which means the immanence of God in man and the immanence of man in God following a strong ṭařīd and a period of divinely floods and revelations through which the Sufi adherent merges into the Whole (Bhattanger, 1984 109).

In addition, Darwīsh uses the Sufi term, “heavens” which implies “the cover of creation and the whole Face of the Most Compassionate” (Al-Hakeem, 1981 210).

Darwīsh evokes the Sufi word “wind,” which denotes

[T]he wind of the will the Compassionate which is connected with the Ancient Will and attached to reality and is the reality of the universe. He makes time meaningless and distracts the peasant away from his being. And He is split in His psyche into bothering gift until the peasant finds it and into an idea which totally haunts the peasant. This idea has good consequences and leads only to virtue. And it is a gift that causes pleasure if it occurs in isolation with God, or when the soul is detached from the body or when the soul unites in God or when the peasant says true words full of love (Al-Ajam, 2000 319, 432).

The peasant in this extract is the Sufi and as long as this Sufi has not found God, God will be an unbearable gift to him. However, if this peasant has accomplished love and craving, his life will be full of happiness.

And the “water” is “the science that cleanse the self from the pollution of manners and the contamination of vices and it is the real witness in the Ancient Revelator, the Lifter of the universe” (Al-Ajam, 2000 819).

But Darwīsh’s use of Sufi meanings goes beyond the borrowing of Sufi terms. The element of the content’s attachment is very prominent. The content of Darwīsh’s poem is profoundly attached to Al-’Aṭṭār’s Manteq al-Tayr. The second text is added to the first and then the mixture of the two texts soar in the space of the Darwīsh’s poem. But first let us consider the plot of Al-’Aṭṭār’s Manteq al-Tayr:

Led by the hoopoe, the birds of the world set forth in search of their king, the Simurgh. Their quest takes them through seven valleys in which a hundred difficulties overwhelm them. In the first, they try to free themselves of what is dear to them but in the process, they undergo many ordeals. Once they succeed in their task, they are filled with longing. Then, they ask for wine to reduce the influences of doctrine, belief, and unbelief on their daily lives. In the second valley, the birds renounce reason for love and carry on their search for the Simurgh. In the third valley, the birds are bewitched upon their discovery that their insight has become unsure and their worldly knowledge has grown ineffective. They cross this valley differently. When they finally arrive at understanding, they find out that some have found the Mḥrāb, others the idol.

The Valley of Detachment, i.e. disengagement from instinctive lusts to acquire material possessions and the aspiration to discover spiritual knowledge is the name of the fourth valley. Here, the birds feel that they have become part of a universe that is aloof from their physical reality.

The planets in their new world are as tiny as sparks of dust and elephants look like ants. In the fifth valley, they realize that unity is not distinguishable from multiplicity. Furthermore, they realize that God is beyond unity, multiplicity and eternity.

Once they are in the sixth valley, the birds become dazed at the magnificence of the Beloved. However, they experience intense sadness and gloominess and feel that their understanding and feeling are crippled. Worse, their sense of self-awareness is shattered.

Surprisingly, only thirty birds manage to reach the Simurgh. To their disappointment, the Simurgh is nowhere to be seen. While kept waiting for the Simurgh, the birds figure out that they themselves are the “si” (thirty) “murgh” (bird). The seventh valley is the valley of dispossession, absentmindedness, dumbness, deafness, and bereavement. The future and present lives of the thirty successful birds become ghosts chased by the celestial sun. And lost in the sea of His Being, the birds themselves are the Simurgh (Manteq al-Tayr, 1979).

Clearly, Al-’Aṭṭār’s poem serves as an inspiration for Darwīsh’s “The Hoopoe.” Al-’Aṭṭār’s plot, content, characters, Sufi terms and other details find direct and indirect reflection in Darwīsh’s poem. Darwīsh’s choice of the hoopoe is similar to Al-’Aṭṭār’s. Writing about the choice of the hoopoe as the guide of the flock, Al-’Aṭṭār says,

And they vowed to walk the road; in fact, they accelerated their walk on the road. And all said, “We must have a pioneer on our way, in whose hand he gathers the scheming of things as well as the solution; he will be our guide on the road because it is impossible to cover the distance relying on arrogance.” They held a vote and their election was blessed. Their choice fell on the hoopoe, the lover. So they all made him thei… And they all vowed that he will be their chief; their guide on the road and shower of the right path, the ruling is his and the command is his (1979, 79-80).

And describing the hoopoe’s directions to his followers, Al-’Aṭṭār adds,

Disperse the souls on the road and walk ahead towards those grasses because we undoubtedly have a king, behind a mountain named the Mountain of Qāf; his name is the Simurgh, the King of Birds. He to us is close and we from him are far. On his place rises a great tree of veils some of which are of light while others are from darkness. He is the absolute King diving in the perfection of honor, power and glory (1979, 79-80).

Now reading Darwīsh’s poem more carefully, one finds strong evidence of intertextuality between the two works. Let us consider the line where the hoopoe presents himself: “I am a hoopoe -the guide said- I will find the way to the spring if the plants get dried.” Noticeably it draws on Al-’Aṭṭār’s hoopoe, who commands the birds, “Disperse the souls on the road and walk ahead towards those grasses.” Moreover, Darwīsh’s saying, “But our journey to forgetfulness has become long and
the veil ahead of us covered the veil, “is reminiscent of Al-`Attār’s saying, “He is covered by hundreds of thousands of veils.” Let us also read Darwish’s following lines:

We said unto you, “We got tired.” He said, “You will not find a pine tree to rest. In vain
Will you request landing. So soar in order to soar.” We said, “Tomorrow
We will fly again. For that land is a mature bosom sucked by these clouds.”

(Lines: 60-62)

These lines are indeed evocative of Al-`Attār’s description of the exhausted birds standing before the hoopoe:

Around the road the birds, all of them, moaned; the blood seeped out of its wings and feathers; they did see the road whose end was unknown. They saw the disease but the cure of it did not become clear…. Eventually they all gathered in one place and stood before the hoopoe spreading their souls. They all came willing to march giving up their souls (1979, 244).

Additionally, Darwish makes use of some terms like “the Valley of Knowledge,” and “the Valley of Passion,” derived from the story of the birds in their march to the Simurgh. He says, “In the belly of the Valley of Passion. Did Al-Ma`arrī stand next to the Valley of Knowledge?” Obviously, these valleys are suggestive of Al-`Attār’s Seven Valleys of Love in Manteq at-Tayr: the Valley of Quest, the Valley of Love, the Valley of Understanding, the Valley of Independence and Detachment, the Valley of Unity, the Valley of Astonishment and Bewilderment, the Valley of Deprivation and Death. According to Al-`Attār, on their way towards the Simurgh, Al-`Attār says that it is full of fear and thieves. Therefore, the birds have to pick a guide in order not to get tired on the earth (126). Darwish must have been aware of these details because he too refers to the road in his poem. Darwish writes, “Indeed, the answer is the road and there is no road except vanishing in the fogs.” Darwish must also have been influenced by Al-`Attār’s idea of the necessity to choose a guide, which is an educational principle in Sufism. The Master is the guide. Al-`Attār says that the group needs a guide and an escort (127).

Darwich in his poem also employs the element of what Gerard Genette calls “paratextuality” which refers to the relation of the text with its “paratext.” Here Darwish refers the title, the story of the hoopoe and the flock of birds on their way to the Simurgh to Al-`Attār’s Manteq at-Tayr. Moreover, interpreting Darwish’s poem reconnects with the interpretation of Manteq at-Tayr without necessarily citing it. This is the element of which Genette calls “metatextualité.”

Thanks to Al-`Attār’s book, the Sufi terms and the different types of intertextuality, Darwish goes beyond the literal meaning of the discourse in “The Hoopoe,” to a deeper figurative and implied meanings.

In employing the “hoopoe,” Darwish manages to improvise a new literary technique which typifies Arabic literature in the phase of postmodernism. This technique involves the reading of an old narrative work and making use of it in such a way that is different from its original intent. In Darwish’s case, the hoopoe is taken from its narrative form and relocated in modern poetry thus converting the story in Darwish’s poem into “expanded narrative” by which critics mean any narrative transcending the literal level of the discourse (Yaqtin, 1997 23; Kilieto, 1997 29-30; Hollway, 1979 47-100 and Ibrahim, 1990 157-158).

Conspicuously, the poem advocates a number of implications related to conversion and cycling in the universe of appearance and disappearance. The hoopoe represents one of Darwish’s diversity of flight images which indicates mobility that admits no definite home, basis or steadiness. One of Darwish’s goals is perhaps to reflect the Palestinian’s expulsion from his homeland. In the Diaspora the Palestinians live under the condition of a constant flight (Al-Hawi, 1992 25).

In essence, the poem, as already indicated, is a dialogue between a hoopoe and a group of birds inquiring about the road to the God of birds. The dialogue, however, is loaded with indications because it, to borrow Al Ash-Shara’s description, depicts two great visions: the vision of the seeker for the sky after evolution and comfort versus the vision of the seeker clutching the earthly world where man can practice his creative human activities (2002, 55-56). To put it simply, it is a dialogue between the earthly and the heavenly worlds and it centers on flying, steadfastness and commitment. The use of the dialogue re-shifts the focus on the reader. The dialogue presented in the mood of “here” and now” turns the reader into a direct witness of the events described. In other words, the events are presented in a mimetic manner, to borrow Genette’s words, they are presented in a scenic way. What is done and said by the characters is staged for the reader, creating the illusion that the readers are “seeing” and “hearing” things for themselves (1972, 162).

Right at the onset of the poem, Darwish renders his plural “I” as a thread in the eye of the needle from which the poem takes them to weave a new cloak for the speaker’s space. The relationship of the “I,” which stands for the hoopoe, with the “we” is so intricately built that the “I” becomes an integral part of the “We” and a constituent of its composition. Darwish employs the medium of the plural first person speaker to foreground a well-established literary legacy in which “we,” the group, replaces “I,” the individual. Such a technique reflects the poet’s purpose to make the cause of the Palestinian people a human, social project, i. e. the cause of all (Araydei, 1999 64).

The voice of the “I” speaking out, “I am a hoopoe” affirms the search for the self. The poet is the hoopoe and the hoopoe is the flock or the group and the “I” becomes the “we” and all of them are on their way for salvation. Hence, the hoopoe is the guide because the hoopoe is always mentioned in association with the guide:

* I am a hoopoe said the guide to the master of things- I look for a sky which has gone astray.
* I am a hoopoe, the guide said to us, and he flew with the rays and dust.
* I am a hoopoe - the guide said - I will find the way to the spring if the plants get dried.

We said to him: we are not birds. He said, you will not reach Him. All belong to Him
And all are in Him and He is in all. Look for Him to find Him in Him for He is in Him.

(Lines: 8, 12, 14-16)

The "we" needs the "I" to instill it with continuity and hope for eternal search for the unknown. Accordingly, the "we" represents the realistic life distinguished by human flaws while the "I" stands for the tendency of absenteeism, or what is behind reality. It is this conflict between these two poles that gives a dramatic value to the poem (Araydei, 1994 66 and Refaei, 1994 29-30). The "we," which stands for the Palestinian people is inclined to go towards absenteeism to rid the people from their weak reality.

The hoopoe moves gradually from the position of the speaker in the first quotation to the position of unification between the speaker and the listener (the addressee) in the second, i.e. the hoopoe becomes the guide. The third contains the response of the flock of birds: "We are not birds." The statement reflects the relationship between Sufism and the birds because birds symbolize flying and in consequence deliverance from captivity and slavery. In other words, the poet hints at his desire to free himself from the chains of the present situation and to attain a new status where he can fly without confines (Hamzah, 2001 45).

In line 29, "Oh, the hoopoe of secrets! Strive so that we can watch in the beloved our beloved," the tone of the poetic "I" comes out clearly. At first, it sounds pessimistic because the poet expects the journey to the Simurgh to be futile. But the Sufi terms immersed in the line (Strive so that we can watch) reverse the meaning. They affirm one meaning which is the poet's search for the universal self-manifested in the road of integrity which goes straightforward without the poet's knowing its end. The poet along with his group intends to move on with his plan of building the Palestinian dream without having to realize the difficulty of the road leading to the accomplishment of the dream.

The question is: how can the dream be achieved? The answer as the following lines indicate lies in poetry:

"Did Al-`Attār haunt you with his poetry?" We said. He said, "He addressed me and vanished
In the belly of the Valley of Passion. "Did Al- Ma'arrī stand next to the Valley of knowledge?"

We said. So he said, "His road is of frivolity." We asked, "And Iben Synā… Did he answer
The question and did he see you?" "I see through the heart not through philosophy."

"Are you a Sufi, then?"
"I am hoopoe. I do not want. I want
Not to want."

(Lines: 46-52)

In Darwīsh's opinion, poetry has a humanitarian message, which draws on Al-`Attār's. The poet believes that poetry is a means through which one can build a new life. This is the meaning of the collective feeling conveyed by poetry and its tools. The arrival of the Simurgh cannot occur unless the birds cling to the poetry of Al-`Attār. So is the attainment of the Palestinian dream. It cannot be achieved without the help of poetry. Consequently, poetry is part of the Palestinian dream which suggests that Darwīsh's "The Hoopoe," is meta-poetical (An-Nabulsei, 1987 512).

The reference to "the Valley of Knowledge" in the above lines, which is an explicit Sufi indication (Bahashrei, 1992 343-346 and Inafi, 1991 30) and the talk about the road which the hoopoe and the birds have to walk, appear in Ma'arqat al-`Aţţar. There, Al-`Aţţar says, "This road demands a perfect human being who can dive into this deep sea and who can demonstrate understanding of secrets. In every era, a new yearning will be generated in you." (Al-`Aţţar, 1979 375-376). In the Sufi tradition, the valley indicates one of seven Sufi conditions or valleys which travelers to the Simurgh have to cross.

As for the questions directed at the hoopoe or the guide, they shed light on the role of the modern poet, the speaker and the gentle "I," or the multiple identities of the poet (Araydei, 1994 100).

Thus, through invoking the Sufi thinking, Darwīsh manages to express general humane meanings. His discourse in this poem moves from the individual level to every individual who undergoes an experience similar to his or lives a tragedy akin to Darwīsh's people.

In the lines that follow the figure of Al-`Aţţar is given a prominence. Through this Sufi figure, the poet compares between the sky and the earth, the body and the soul. In addition, he reiterates Al-`Aţţar’s famous saying that "yearning is fire there while the mind is smoke," when he states: "And the mind is nothing except smoke" (Hamzah, 2001 48).

The "vision" referred to is surely derived from the sphere of knowledge, which is also a clear Sufi indication. The poet, however, tries to go beyond it in order to give a wider meaning to his message. Unlike the Sufi text which maintains a strict and firm relationship between the Sufi practitioner and his God, Darwīsh wants his poem to "integrate all those living in this world within a subterranean knowledge" (Hamzah, 2001 48). In other words, the Sufi text as depicted by Al-`Aţţar
through the journey of birds is confined to the case of the relationship between God and the Sufi practitioner while the Darwish's case has universal implications. It concerns all people throughout the world.

In lines, 50-52, "Are you a Sufi, then? I am a hoopoe. I do not want. 'I want / Not to want,"

which illustrate the phenomenon of the repetition of words to create a musical background for the text, there is a new convergence of all the different aspects of the "I," we, you and I. The first person-speaker plural, "we," initiates a conversation with the third person-speaker singular, "he," then he, mergers with it, I.e., with "he." Then "he" turns into "you." All these forms of the pronouns attain various matrices with one incarnate structure replicating the modern speaker (Araydeh, 1994 69). Therefore, while the external form of the conversation indicates it is held with four sides, it is in fact a conversation with the self. "He" is the individual who experiences the poet's cause; "you" is the hoopoe standing for solution of the cause, "we" is the group undergoing the same fate, i.e. the poet's group while "I" is the targeted person, the individual to whom the cause belongs. The four sides are related by the cause, so to speak.

The hoopoe does stand for the contemporary man who lives the phase of search in the make. Through the process, he wants to find meaning for everything he encounters and so the hoopoe in the end achieves the purpose of the volume in which this poem appears: I See What I Want. The hoopoe wants to see what he wants (Hamzah, 2001 49).

The Hoopoe's questions in the poem are in fact the poet's to reflect his full feeling of the new Arab individual's existence. Indeed Darwish places in the foreground the four major elements constituting that existence: the land, the homeland, humanity and nationalism. Moreover, these questions, as Adonis maintains, are a call-out to resubmit major events for further questions and investigations. They are also a sign of metaphysical sensitivity capable of feeling things very deeply.

The new poetry, Adonis adds, reflected in the type endorsed by him, Darwish and others, is the meta-physicality of the human existence (Adonis, 1996 10). Put differently, the subjects, which employ the metaphysical aspects of life usually, create sensitivity and questions inside the reader.

Conclusion

Why does Darwish, the modern Arab poet who preaches universal ethical codes, avant-garde ideas, advanced intellectualism, liberty as well as patriotism and pan-Arabism, make use of Sufi figures, masks and texts in this poem? Does this mean that Darwish is also converting his poem to a Sufi, religious text? Perhaps yes. The Sufi religious text also promotes the same attitudes and ideas that are embraced by Darwish. By the same token, it can be said that Farid Ed-Din Al-Attār, the Sufi preacher, becomes a national leader and guide who will help the Palestinian people attain their dream of building their homeland. 4 This suggests that Darwish is adopting an attitude in which he constructs his poetical consciousness on a former one, a type of consciousness which manifests itself in a latter one. This unique form of consciousness necessitates the poet to conceal his ideological viewpoints beyond the explicit ideas of a creative work. This is accomplished through an act of transparency in which the poet presents images and ideas inspired from the ancestors' legacy in order to tell about the plights of his own era (Ash-Shu'abie, 2002 157).

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