

# Identity and Resistance in Mahmoud Darwish's Poem "Bitaqah Hawiyyah": A Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis

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## Abstrak

This study aims to explore the construction of identity and resistance in Mahmoud Darwish's poem *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* through Roland Barthes' semiotic framework. The poem articulates the collective experience of the Palestinian people who face dispossession and political oppression while continuously affirming their existence through language and symbolism. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, this research analyzes the poem at three semiotic levels: denotation, connotation, and myth, in order to uncover how linguistic signs function ideologically within the text. The findings reveal that Darwish strategically transforms administrative and everyday language into a medium of resistance. Expressions such as "Record! I am an Arab," references to family, land, roots, and stones operate not merely as personal statements but as symbolic affirmations of collective identity. At the mythological level, these signs construct a discourse of steadfastness (*sumūd*), presenting Palestinian identity as an enduring cultural and existential force rather than a temporary social status. This study contributes to the field of literary and cultural studies by demonstrating that *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* functions as a poetic manifesto in which language becomes a site of struggle, memory, and resistance, reinforcing the role of poetry as a powerful instrument in articulating national identity and opposing colonial domination.

**Keywords:** Mahmoud Darwish, *Bitaqah Hawiyyah*, Identity, Resistance, Roland Barthes Semiotics

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## INTRODUCTION

Mahmoud Darwish's poem *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* (*Identity Card*) stands as one of the most iconic literary expressions of Palestinian identity and resistance in modern Arabic literature. Written in the context of Israeli occupation, the poem articulates the lived experience of a people whose existence is continuously regulated, marginalized, and threatened through political and administrative mechanisms. Through direct and repetitive language, Darwish affirms identity not merely as a legal status but as a moral and cultural stance against colonial domination (Arwan & Ukhrawiyah, 2019; Reskiana, 2024).

The poem opens with the emphatic declaration "سَجِّلْ! أَنَا عَرَبِيٌّ" ("Record! I am an Arab"), which functions as a confrontational linguistic act. This statement challenges systems of power that seek to define identity through bureaucratic control and surveillance. In this sense, identity in *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* is transformed into an arena of resistance, where language becomes a means of reclaiming agency and historical

presence (Ulfa, 2020). Darwish does not present identity as a static marker; rather, it is continuously negotiated through symbols of land, labor, family, and memory.

Beyond its immediate Palestinian context, *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* has gained significant recognition both within and outside the Arab world. The poem has been translated into multiple languages and frequently cited in discussions of global resistance literature, postcolonial identity, and cultural nationalism. Its themes resonate with broader audiences experiencing displacement, colonial violence, and identity erasure, positioning Darwish as a global voice of resistance rather than solely a national poet (Al Fawa'ra, 2019; Ganai & Irshad, 2021). In contemporary contexts, the poem continues to circulate widely in political discourse, academic studies, and pro-Palestinian movements, reinforcing its relevance as a cultural text that transcends temporal and geographical boundaries.

Scholarly engagement with *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* has often emphasized its political dimension, particularly its articulation of nationalism and resistance against occupation. Previous studies have examined the poem through sociological, ideological, and stylistic perspectives, highlighting its role in shaping Palestinian collective consciousness (Hafidzulloh & Salam, 2021; Muslim, 2024). However, fewer studies have systematically explored how the poem constructs layered meanings through signs and symbols that operate simultaneously at literal, cultural, and ideological levels.

To address this gap, this study employs Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which allows literary texts to be read as systems of signs that produce meaning through denotation, connotation, and myth. Barthes' framework is particularly relevant for analyzing *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* because it reveals how everyday language and common symbols are elevated into ideological narratives that naturalize resistance and identity. Through this approach, poetry is not only seen as aesthetic expression but also as a site where power relations, historical memory, and cultural ideology are contested.

Accordingly, this research aims to examine how Mahmoud Darwish constructs the discourse of identity and resistance in *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* through semiotic mechanisms. By analyzing the poem's linguistic signs and symbolic structures, this study seeks to demonstrate that Darwish's poetry functions as a form of cultural resistance, where identity becomes an enduring myth that challenges colonial narratives and affirms the continuity of Palestinian existence.

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory as its primary analytical framework. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the object of this research is a literary text that requires interpretative analysis to uncover symbolic, ideological, and cultural meanings embedded within language.

The primary data source of this study is Mahmoud Darwish's poem *Bitaqah Hawiyyah*, analyzed in its original Arabic text alongside its English translation. The use of the original Arabic version is intended to preserve the semantic nuances, stylistic features, and cultural specificity of the poem, while the translation functions as a supporting reference to clarify meaning.

## 1. Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through a close reading technique. The poem was read repeatedly and carefully to identify significant linguistic signs, symbols, and expressions related to themes of identity and resistance. Particular attention was given to recurring words, imperative sentences, metaphors, and imagery such as identity cards, land, roots, stones, family, and labor. These elements were selected because they function as key signifiers that structure the ideological message of the poem.

The identification of data was conducted manually without the assistance of software, allowing for contextual sensitivity and interpretative flexibility. Relevant lines and stanzas were selected as analytical units based on their symbolic prominence and thematic relevance to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted using Roland Barthes' three-level semiotic model:

### 1. Denotative Analysis

At this stage, the selected signs were examined based on their literal or surface meanings as presented in the text. This analysis focuses on what is explicitly stated in the poem without interpretative expansion.

### 2. Connotative Analysis

The second stage involves interpreting the cultural, social, and political meanings associated with the identified signs. At this level, the signs are analyzed in relation to the Palestinian socio-historical context, revealing how ordinary language and imagery convey implicit meanings of resistance, dignity, and collective identity.

### 3. Mythological Analysis

The final stage explores how denotative and connotative meanings develop into broader ideological myths. In this context, myth refers to the naturalization of resistance and identity as taken-for-granted truths. Through this level of analysis, the poem is interpreted as constructing a myth of Palestinian steadfastness (*sumūd*), where identity becomes an enduring cultural and existential narrative.

## Use of Supporting Literature

Secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, semiotic theory, and Palestinian resistance literature. These sources were used to contextualize the analysis, strengthen interpretation, and compare findings with existing scholarship. Supporting literature also functions as a means of theoretical validation, ensuring that the semiotic interpretations are grounded in established academic discourse.

Through these methodological steps, this study systematically reveals how linguistic signs in Bitaqah Hawiyyah operate not only as poetic expressions but also as ideological instruments that articulate identity and resistance within a colonial context.

## DISCUSSION

Mahmoud Darwish's poem "Bitaqah Hawiyyah" is one of the most powerful works in depicting the struggle for Arab identity, particularly Palestinian (Hafidzulloh & Salam, 2021). Through straightforward yet meaning-laden language, the poet affirms his existence as an "Arab" amid situations of oppression and erasure of national identity. Each stanza contains social, political, and humanitarian symbols

that interweave to form a narrative of resistance (Masyitoh, Haniefa, & Bahtiar, 2025). With Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, this poem can be read in three layers of meaning: denotative, connotative, and myth. The following analysis traces how linguistic signs in each stanza construct the myth of Arab identity as a form of resistance against colonialism.

Written in 1964, during a period of intensified Israeli occupation and the implementation of mandatory identity card systems for Palestinians, this poem emerged as both literary art and political manifesto (Reskiana, 2024). The historical context is crucial: Palestinians were required to carry Israeli-issued identity cards that determined their freedom of movement, access to employment, and legal status – transforming bureaucratic documentation into an instrument of surveillance and control (Alhirthani, 2024, p. 7). Darwish's appropriation of the phrase "Record! I am an Arab" subverts this administrative language, transforming it from a tool of oppression into a declaration of defiant pride.

### **Semiotic Analysis of the Poem Bitaqah Hawiyyah**

The semiotic analysis of Mahmoud Darwish's poem Bitaqah Hawiyyah is conducted by tracing linguistic and cultural signs that appear in each stanza. Through Roland Barthes' framework, each stanza is read as a sign system containing three layers of meaning: denotative, connotative, and mythological. This approach enables a deeper reading of the poem's symbolic structure, where language is not only a medium of expression but also an arena of ideological resistance.

Analysis of each section becomes important because this poem is built gradually and repetitively, with each section presenting layers of meaning that strengthen the message of identity and resistance. Word repetition, symbolic imagery, and Darwish's distinctive diction choices function as rhetorical strategies that reinforce the existential consciousness of an "Arab" amid colonial oppression (Masyitoh, Haniefa, & Bahtiar, 2025). Therefore, the following discussion will examine the meanings of these signs systematically from the first to the last stanza, to reveal how this poem forms discourse of identity and resistance through language.

The poem's structure itself is significant: composed of ten thematic sections, each building upon the previous to create what Nofal (2017) terms a "crescendo of resistance" – moving from simple declaration to complex threat, from individual identity to collective consciousness (p. 68). This architectural progression mirrors the psychological journey from oppression to resistance, from silence to voice.

## **2. Declaration of Identity as a Sign of Existence**

The poem Bitaqah Hawiyyah opens with a firm and confrontational declaration:

سَجِّلْ! أَنَا عَرَبِيٌّ

"Record! I am an Arab."

At the denotative level, this line functions as an instruction to record personal identity. However, within the socio-political context of Palestinian life under occupation, the verb "record" carries strong administrative connotations related to surveillance, regulation, and colonial control. By appropriating bureaucratic

language, Darwish symbolically subverts the authority that seeks to define identity through official documentation.

### Extended Analysis:

The imperative verb سَجِّلْ (*sajjil* - "record") is particularly loaded with historical significance. Under Ottoman, British Mandate, and Israeli rule, Palestinians have been subjected to successive registration systems designed to track, categorize, and control population movements (Khalidi, 1997). The identity card system implemented after 1948 created a tiered classification that differentiated between Israeli citizens, West Bank residents, Gaza residents, and refugees – each category carrying different rights and restrictions (Reskiana, 2024, p. 78).

What makes Darwish's appropriation revolutionary is the reversal of agency. Typically, the colonized subject is *recorded* by the colonial authority – a passive object of bureaucratic inscription. Here, the poet commands: "You record *me*" – seizing narrative authority and transforming documentation from imposed categorization into self-declaration (Muslim, 2024, p. 59). This performative reversal aligns with what Judith Butler terms "speech acts" that constitute identity through their very utterance (cited in Hegarty, 2023, p. 108).

At the connotative level, the statement "I am an Arab" (أَنَا عَرَبِيٌّ) serves as an existential affirmation rather than a mere ethnic label. Identity here is articulated as self-conscious resistance against erasure. In contemporary Palestinian reality, where identity cards determine movement, residence, and legal recognition, this declaration resonates as a political act that challenges imposed definitions of belonging.

The choice of the word "Arab" (عَرَبِيٌّ) rather than "Palestinian" (فلسطيني) is significant. Writing in 1964, before the Palestinian nationalist movement fully crystallized around the term "Palestinian," Darwish employs "Arab" to invoke pan-Arab solidarity while simultaneously claiming a specific territorial and cultural identity (Arwan & Ukhrawiyah, 2019, p. 4). This linguistic choice connects Palestinian struggle to broader Arab anti-colonial movements, positioning local resistance within a transnational framework of liberation.

Moreover, the exclamation mark after "Record!" (اسْجِّلْ!) carries emotional force – anger, defiance, urgency. In Arabic typography, punctuation is often sparse; the deliberate inclusion of this exclamation signals heightened affect and confrontational stance (Ganai & Irshad, 2021, p. 274). The poem thus opens not with quiet assertion but with vocal demand.

At the mythological level, the repeated declaration constructs a myth of steadfastness (*sumūd*), naturalizing resistance as an inherent aspect of Palestinian identity. Following Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, language in this poem does not simply describe reality but performs resistance. Thus, asserting identity becomes an act of reclaiming historical presence and dignity in the face of colonial domination.

### Mythological Depth:

Barthes (1972) argues that myth functions to naturalize ideology – to make historically constructed meanings appear timeless and inevitable. Colonial discourse creates myths that naturalize occupation: the myth of "land without people for people without land," the myth of Palestinian backwardness justifying "civilizing"

intervention, the myth of Arab violence necessitating military control (Said, 1978). Darwish's counter-myth—that being Arab is inherently a condition of resistance—operates on the same mythological register but inverts colonial ideology.

This opening line has achieved iconic status beyond the poem itself. During the 2021 Sheikh Jarrah protests against forced evictions in East Jerusalem, activists spray-painted "سَجِّلْ! أَنَا عَرَبِيٌّ" on walls throughout the city, while international solidarity demonstrators translated the phrase into dozens of languages on social media (Masyitoh, Haniefah, & Bahtiar, 2025, p. 3). This contemporary reactivation demonstrates what Barthes would recognize as the *social life of myth*—symbols created in one historical moment continue to accumulate new meanings across generations while retaining their mythological essence.

The declaration also functions as what Priwanda and Fanani (2024) term "ontological resistance"—the assertion that *mere existence* under conditions designed to eliminate that existence constitutes an act of defiance (p. 6). To declare "I am" when systems of power deny your right to be is to transform being itself into rebellion.

### Contemporary Resonance:

The relevance of this opening has only intensified in the 21st century. The Israeli West Bank barrier, checkpoints, and permit systems continue to make Palestinian identity cards determinative of life possibilities (Hafidzulloh & Salam, 2021, p. 57). Palestinians carry color-coded IDs: green for West Bank residents, blue for Jerusalem residents, orange for Gaza—each determining which roads can be traveled, which cities entered, which hospitals accessed. In this context, Darwish's transformation of the ID card from instrument of control to banner of pride remains urgently political rather than merely literary.

Furthermore, the global resurgence of identity politics—from Black Lives Matter's assertion "I can't breathe" to indigenous sovereignty movements worldwide—has created new contexts for receiving Darwish's words. The poem's insistence on self-naming resonates with contemporary struggles against systemic erasure, making "Record! I am an Arab" comprehensible to audiences who have never experienced Israeli occupation but understand what it means to have one's existence questioned or denied (Alhirthani, 2024, p. 11)..

### 3. Regeneration and Hope as Signs of Identity Continuity

The continuity of identity in Bitaqah Hawiyyah is expressed through the imagery of family and children, as illustrated in the following lines:

وَأُطْفَالِي ثَمَانِيَّةٌ  
وَتَأْسِعُهُمْ شَيَاتِي بَعْدَ صَيْفٍ

"I have eight children, and the ninth will come after summer."

Denotatively, these lines present personal information regarding family size. Connotatively, children symbolize regeneration and the persistence of collective identity. In a context marked by displacement and dispossession, the act of having children becomes a silent yet powerful form of resistance, affirming that Palestinian existence will continue despite ongoing attempts at erasure.

### Extended Analysis:

The specificity of "eight children" (أَطْفَالِي ثَمَانِيَّةً) operates on multiple levels. Denotatively, it presents demographic information. But in the context of 1960s Palestinian society facing displacement and diaspora, large families functioned as demographic resistance – a biological counter to depopulation (Nofal, 2017, p. 69). The Nakba of 1948 had displaced approximately 750,000 Palestinians; childbearing became not merely personal choice but collective survival strategy.

The phrase "the ninth will come after summer" (وَتَأْسِعُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِي بَعْدَ صَيْفٍ) introduces temporal futurity into the poem. This is not completed fact but anticipated future – a grammatical construction that asserts continuity beyond the present moment (Munawaroh, 2022, p. 8). The future tense (*sa-ya'tī* - "will come") performs what speech-act theory calls a "commissive" – a linguistic act that commits the speaker to future action, thereby constructing that future through language itself.

The seasonal reference "after summer" (بَعْدَ صَيْفٍ) grounds this future in the agricultural cycle, linking human reproduction to land and harvest. Summer in Palestine is the season of olive harvest, wheat threshing, and agricultural abundance (Al Fawa'ra, 2019, p. 421). By linking birth to agricultural seasonality, Darwish roots human continuity in the land itself – children grow from Palestinian soil just as crops do.

At the mythological level, children represent the future of collective memory and struggle. Darwish transforms domestic life into a political symbol, where birth signifies cultural survival and historical continuity. This symbolism remains highly relevant in contemporary Palestinian society, where family and intergenerational transmission play a crucial role in preserving identity, language, and historical consciousness.

### Mythological and Demographic Dimensions:

Barthes' concept of myth as naturalized ideology applies powerfully here. Darwish transforms what might be dismissed as mere reproductive fact into a myth of Palestinian *eternity*. Each birth is mythologized as proof that Palestinians cannot be eliminated – that life persists despite death, that future generations will inherit the struggle (Rustam, Ahmad, & Pallawagau, 2024, p. 1096).

This myth responds directly to Zionist demographic anxieties. Since 1948, Israeli policy has grappled with what David Ben-Gurion termed the "demographic problem" – how to maintain a Jewish majority state when Palestinian birth rates exceeded Jewish birth rates (Khalidi, 1997). Darwish's enumeration of children thus engages directly with demographic warfare, asserting that Palestinian reproduction itself is political resistance.

Contemporary statistics bear out this symbolic logic: despite ongoing occupation, displacement, and violence, the Palestinian population has grown from approximately 1.4 million in 1948 to over 14 million today (Reskiana, 2024, p. 82). This demographic persistence – often termed *sumud* (steadfastness) – validates Darwish's

poetic prophecy that Palestinian existence would continue "after summer," after occupation, into futures that colonizers cannot control.

The image of children also invokes what Fanon (1963) termed "national consciousness" transmitted through generations. Palestinian children learn their history not primarily from official archives (often controlled by Israel) but through family narratives, poems like this one, and embodied cultural practices (Alhirthani, 2024, p. 9). Each generation becomes living archive, carrying memory forward through time.

### Gender and Reproduction:

While Darwish's speaker is male, the imagery of childbearing implicitly invokes Palestinian women as reproducers of the nation – a gendered dimension that feminist scholars have analyzed critically. Palestinian women's bodies become contested territory in nationalist discourse: celebrated as vessels of demographic resistance but also burdened with the expectation to "breed resistance fighters" (Nofal, 2017, p. 71). The poem's silence about maternal labor – the actual work of pregnancy, birth, and childcare – reflects broader nationalist narratives that celebrate reproduction while erasing female agency.

However, contemporary Palestinian feminist readings of Darwish recuperate this imagery by emphasizing that women's choice to bear children under occupation is itself an act of agency – a refusal to let violence dictate reproductive decisions (cited in Masyitoh, Haniefa, & Bahtiar, 2025, p. 5). From this perspective, the ninth child represents not patriarchal demand but maternal-paternal collaboration in creating futures.

### 4. Labor and Dignity as a Narrative of Resistance

The theme of labor as a source of dignity and resistance appears prominently in the following lines:

وأعملُ مع رفاق الكدح في محجرٍ  
أسألُ لهم رغيفَ الخبز من الصخر

"I work with my comrades in a quarry, extracting bread for them from stone."

At the denotative level, the poem describes physical labor in a quarry. Connotatively, labor is elevated into a symbol of self-reliance and moral integrity. The transformation of "stone" into "bread" signifies resilience – the ability to produce life and sustenance from hardship. This imagery reflects the lived realities of many Palestinians whose access to land and employment is systematically restricted.

### Extended Analysis:

The phrase "comrades of toil" (رفاق الكدح - *rifāq al-kadh*) introduces class consciousness into the poem. *Kadh* denotes hard, physical, grinding labor – work that wears down the body. By identifying with *rifāq* (comrades/companions), Darwish positions himself within a working-class collective rather than claiming individual exceptionalism (Priwanda & Fanani, 2024, p. 7).

This is significant because it rejects bourgeois nationalism that celebrates elite leaders while erasing workers' contributions. Instead, Darwish articulates what might



be termed *proletarian nationalism*—a vision of Palestinian liberation grounded in the experiences and labor of ordinary workers, farmers, and refugees rather than urban intellectuals or political elites (Ganai & Irshad, 2021, p. 276).

The quarry (*mahjar* - محجر) is not incidental setting but loaded symbol. Quarries in Palestine have multiple resonances:

1. **Economic exploitation:** Under occupation, Palestinian quarry workers often labored for Israeli construction companies, extracting stone that would be used to build settlements on confiscated Palestinian land—a bitter irony that Palestinian labor materially constructed their own dispossession (Hafidzulloh & Salam, 2021, p. 58).
2. **Geological metaphor:** Palestine's limestone landscape means that stone (*ṣakhr* - صخر) is everywhere—in buildings, walls, terraces, roads. Stone is Palestine materialized. Working in a quarry thus means being in intimate, daily contact with the literal substance of the homeland (Al Fawa'ra, 2019, p. 422).
3. **Biblical resonance:** Stone also carries religious significance. Moses struck water from rock; Jesus was laid in a stone tomb; the Dome of the Rock (*Qubbat al-Ṣakhra*) in Jerusalem sits atop the Foundation Stone sacred in Islamic tradition. By "extracting bread from stone," Darwish invokes a tradition of miracles—life from seeming barrenness.

The line "I extract bread for them from stone" (أَسْلُ لَهُمْ رَغِيفَ الْخُبْزِ مِنَ الصَّخْرِ) performs multiple rhetorical operations:

- **Transformation:** Stone (صخر) → Bread (خبز). This is alchemy, transmutation, miracle. It asserts that Palestinian labor can create sustenance from the hardest materials.
- **Provision:** "For them" (لَهُمْ) indicates that labor serves collective needs, not individual profit. The worker feeds his children, his community.
- **Effort:** The verb أَسْلُ (*asllu*) means to extract, draw out, pull forth—implying difficulty, resistance, struggle. Bread does not come easily but must be wrested from unwilling matter.

At the mythological level, the figure of the worker becomes emblematic of collective resistance rooted in perseverance rather than violence. Darwish dismantles colonial stereotypes that portray the colonized subject as passive or dependent, replacing them with a myth of dignity grounded in labor, endurance, and attachment to land. In this way, work itself becomes an ideological act that resists dehumanization.

### Mythological Construction of Labor:

Barthes (1972) analyzes how myth often conceals labor—making products appear natural rather than produced. Darwish reverses this: he makes labor hypervisible, centering the poem on the worker's body and effort. This visibility contests colonial myths that Palestinians are lazy, unproductive, or culturally backward—stereotypes used to justify occupation as "making the desert bloom" (Rustam, Ahmad, & Pallawagau, 2024, p. 1097).

The myth Darwish constructs is that Palestinian dignity derives not from noble ancestry or formal education but from productive labor on and with the land. This is a myth of *working-class honor* that challenges both colonial and traditional Arab

hierarchies. In Barthes' terms, it is a *counter-myth* that opposes dominant ideologies from multiple directions simultaneously.

### Comparison with Global Labor Poetry:

This stanza resonates with international traditions of working-class poetry – from Walt Whitman's celebration of laborers in *Leaves of Grass* to Pablo Neruda's *Canto General* honoring Latin American workers to Bertolt Brecht's Marxist verse. Like these poets, Darwish elevates manual labor from invisible necessity to visible heroism (Nofal, 2017, p. 70).

However, Darwish's context differs: Palestinian workers labor under military occupation, often for the economic benefit of occupiers. This adds a dimension absent from other labor poetry – the worker's product is alienated not just in the Marxist sense (as surplus value extracted by capital) but in a colonial sense (as material resources extracted to build the infrastructure of domination). Palestinian quarry workers literally cut the stones that Israel uses to build checkpoints and walls (Alhirthani, 2024, p. 12).

### Contemporary Labor Realities:

Today, approximately 30,000 Palestinians work in Israeli settlements and industrial zones, often in construction and quarrying (Reskiana, 2024, p. 83). This labor force faces severe exploitation: lower wages than Israeli workers, no labor protections, arbitrary dismissals, and the daily humiliation of checkpoint crossings to reach worksites. Yet many have no alternative employment given systematic restrictions on Palestinian economic development.

Darwish's poem thus speaks directly to ongoing realities. The image of "extracting bread from stone" captures the existential condition of workers who must collaborate with their own oppression to survive, yet maintain dignity and consciousness even within exploitative structures. The "comrades of toil" are not romanticized revolutionary heroes but ordinary people navigating impossible contradictions with whatever grace they can muster.

## 5. Identity without Titles and Existential Patience

Darwish further emphasizes identity as a moral and existential stance rather than a social status, as expressed in the following line:

بِلاَ لَقَبٍ

"Without any title."

At the denotative level, the phrase indicates the absence of formal titles or social distinctions. Connotatively, it reflects a rejection of hierarchical recognition imposed by colonial or bureaucratic systems. Identity in this context is not validated by official ranks, academic degrees, or institutional acknowledgment, but by lived experience and ethical endurance.

### Extended Analysis:

In Arabic culture, titles (*alqāb* - ألقاب, singular *laqab* - لقب) carry significant social weight. Traditional titles include:

- Genealogical: *ibn* (son of), indicating lineage
- Religious: *shaykh*, *sayyid*, *hājī*, indicating religious learning or pilgrimage
- Professional: *duktūr* (doctor), *muhandis* (engineer), *ustādh* (professor)
- Honorary: titles bestowed by rulers or communities

To declare oneself "without title" (*bilā laqab* - بلا لقب) is therefore to strip away social markers that traditionally confer honor (*sharaf* - شرف) and respect (*ihtirām* - احترام) in Arab society (Ganai & Irshad, 2021, p. 277). This is radical self-reduction—the speaker presents himself as bare existence, unadorned by credentials.

However, this apparent self-diminishment is actually self-exaltation. By rejecting titles, Darwish rejects the entire social system that requires such markers for recognition. He asserts that his identity as "an Arab" requires no further qualification—no degree, no lineage, no honorific can add to or subtract from the fundamental fact of his being (Antonia, 2023, p. 39).

This stance has several ideological functions:

1. **Egalitarianism:** It positions the speaker as equal to all other Arabs regardless of social class, challenging hierarchies within Palestinian/Arab society itself (not just colonial hierarchies).
2. **Ontological priority:** It asserts that *being* precedes social *becoming*—existence is more fundamental than any role or status one might acquire.
3. **Colonial critique:** Colonial systems often granted titles and positions to collaborators ("moderate" leaders, appointed officials) who derived authority from colonial recognition rather than popular legitimacy. To refuse titles is to refuse this collaborative system.

The fuller passage in the poem reads:

"I am a name without title  
Patient in a land where everything  
Lives in a rage of anger"

أَنَا اسْمٌ بِلَا لَقَبٍ  
صَبُورٌ فِي بِلَادٍ كُلُّ مَا فِيهَا  
يَعِيشُ بِفُورَةِ الْغَضَبِ

At the mythological level, patience (*ṣabr* - صبر) is transformed into an active form of resistance rather than passive submission. In Barthes' terms, patience becomes a naturalized cultural myth that frames endurance as strength (Barthes, 1972). This interpretation aligns with broader Palestinian narratives in which waiting, surviving, and remaining rooted are understood as non-violent strategies of resistance against structural domination (Khalidi, 1997).

### Mythologizing Patience:

The concept of *ṣabr* (patience/endurance) carries deep religious and cultural resonance in Islamic tradition, where it is repeatedly commanded as a virtue in the Quran: "O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer" (Quran 2:153). However, Darwish's use of *ṣabr* is not primarily religious but political—it is endurance in the face of injustice, not mere acceptance of divine will (Munawaroh, 2022, p. 9).

The contrast between the speaker's patience and the land's rage creates productive tension. Everything around him "lives in a rage of anger" (يَعِيشُ بِفُورَةِ الْغَضَبِ), yet he remains patient (*ṣabūr* - صبور). This does not mean passive acceptance but rather what might be called *strategic patience*—the long-term endurance of a people who understand that liberation may take generations (Nofal, 2017, p. 72).

This patience is itself a form of resistance against colonial desires. Colonizers want the colonized to either submit completely or rebel violently (which justifies further repression). Palestinian *ṣabr* refuses both options: it neither submits nor explodes, but persists. This persistence frustrates colonial temporality, which imagines occupation as a temporary transition toward either assimilation or elimination (Alhirthani, 2024, p. 13).

Barthes (1972) argues that myth operates by transforming history into nature – making culturally specific values appear universal and eternal. Darwish's mythologization of patience performs this operation: Palestinian endurance is presented not as contingent historical response but as timeless cultural essence. This is strategically valuable because it suggests that Palestinian resistance will outlast any particular occupier – patience can outwait even the most powerful empires.

### **Contrast with Anger:**

The juxtaposition of personal patience with environmental rage is crucial. The land itself—not just its people—lives "in a rage of anger" (بغورة الغضب). This personification makes anger a natural, geological force rather than merely human emotion. Mountains, valleys, olive trees, stones themselves rage against occupation (Al Fawa'ra, 2019, p. 423).

This imagery suggests that even if Palestinians were eliminated, the land itself would continue resisting—a comforting mythological assurance that resistance is inevitable and cannot be permanently suppressed. It also distributes agency beyond human actors: resistance becomes environmental, natural, inevitable rather than dependent on individual or collective human will.

### **Contemporary Relevance:**

The concept of *ṣabr* remains central to Palestinian discourse. The term *sumud* (steadfastness), which became prominent after 1967, shares semantic field with *ṣabr*—both denote enduring presence despite adverse conditions (Hafidzulloh & Salam, 2021, p. 60). Palestinians who refuse to leave their homes despite economic hardship, who rebuild demolished houses, who plant olive trees knowing they may be uprooted—all practice *sumud/ṣabr*.

However, younger generations have sometimes challenged this discourse, arguing that *ṣabr* can become an excuse for inaction or that it places unbearable psychological burden on individuals to endure the unendurable (Reskiana, 2024, p. 85). Darwish's formulation acknowledges this tension: patience exists alongside rage, neither canceling the other but held in dialectical relationship.

Thus, Darwish constructs an alternative value system where dignity is detached from colonial recognition and grounded instead in moral resilience.

## **6. Roots and Land as Symbols of Historical Legitimacy**

One of the strongest symbolic affirmations of historical continuity in *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* appears in the metaphor of roots:

جُدُورِي قَبْلَ مِيلَادِ الزَّمَانِ رَسَتْ

"My roots were established before the birth of time."

Denotatively, the line refers to ancestry and origin. Connotatively, roots function as a metaphor for historical legitimacy and indigeneity. Darwish positions Palestinian presence as preceding colonial narratives that frame the land as empty or ahistorical. This symbolic claim directly challenges colonial discourses that attempt to erase indigenous history.

### Extended Analysis:

The Arabic word for roots — *judhūr* (جذور) — carries botanical, genealogical, and epistemological meanings simultaneously. Botanically, roots are the underground parts of plants that anchor them to soil and draw sustenance from earth. Genealogically, *judhūr* refers to ancestral origins and family lineage. Epistemologically, *judhūr* can mean foundations or fundamental principles (as in *uṣūl*, from the same root √j-dh-r).

By invoking *judhūr*, Darwish makes several simultaneous claims:

1. **Territorial indigeneity:** Palestinians are rooted in this specific land, not immigrants or recent arrivals
2. **Historical depth:** This rootedness extends far into the past, beyond documented history
3. **Organic connection:** The relationship between people and land is natural, biological, not merely political or legal
4. **Stability:** Roots anchor and stabilize; they resist uprooting

The hyperbolic claim "before the birth of time" (قَبْلَ مِيلَادِ الزَّمَانِ) performs what literary critics call *founding mythology*. It asserts a presence so ancient that it precedes temporality itself — a claim that cannot be empirically verified or falsified because it operates in mythological rather than historical register (Nofal, 2017, p. 70).

This is crucial because it directly contests Zionist historical narratives. The Zionist movement justified its claims to Palestine through biblical history dating back approximately 3,000 years. Darwish's response is to assert Palestinian presence "before time" — before history, before documentation, before even the biblical period that Zionism invokes. It is a poetic strategy of temporal one-upmanship that refuses to compete on historical terms and instead appeals to mythological primacy (Alhirthani, 2024, p. 14).

The fuller passage reads:

"My roots... were established before the  
birth of time

And before the opening of ages

Before the cypress and the olive

Before the grass grew"

جُدُورِي ... قَبْلَ مِيلَادِ الزَّمَانِ رَسَتْ

وَقَبْلَ تَفْتِاحِ الْحَقَبِ

وَقَبْلَ السَّرْوِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ

وَقَبْلَ تَرَعْرِعِ الْعُشْبِ

At the mythological level, the image of roots constructs a counter-myth to settler colonial ideology. Barthes (1972) argues that myth serves to naturalize ideological narratives; in this poem, Darwish reverses this process by exposing colonial myths and replacing them with a narrative of deep historical belonging. This interpretation resonates with postcolonial scholarship that views land not merely as territory but as a repository of memory, identity, and resistance (Said, 1994; Fanon, 1963).

### Temporal Layering and Primordial Claims:

The anaphoric repetition of "before" (قَبْلَ—*qabla*) four times creates a cascading regression into deeper and deeper past:

1. "Before the birth of time" (قَبْلَ ميلاد الزمان) — before chronology itself
2. "Before the opening of ages" (قَبْلَ تَفْتِاحِ الحقب) — before historical epochs
3. "Before the cypress and olive" (قَبْلَ السرو والزيتون) — before specific vegetation
4. "Before the grass grew" (قَبْلَ تَرَعِ العشب) — before even the simplest plants

This creates what narratologists call *narrative depth*—each "before" takes us further back, establishing layers of temporal priority (Munawaroh, 2022, p. 10). The final image—"before grass grew"—is particularly powerful because grass is among the first plants to colonize bare ground. To claim presence before grass is to claim presence at the moment of ecological genesis itself.

The specific mention of cypress and olive is symbolically loaded. The olive tree (*zaytūn*—زيتون) is perhaps the most powerful symbol in Palestinian culture:

- **Longevity:** Olive trees can live for thousands of years; some in Palestine are estimated to be over 2,000 years old
- **Resilience:** Olives survive harsh conditions, regenerating even after fire or cutting
- **Sustenance:** Olives provide food, oil, wood — material basis for life
- **Peace:** The olive branch is an ancient Mediterranean symbol of peace and prosperity
- **Sacred significance:** Olives are mentioned repeatedly in Quran and Bible

By asserting that his roots predate even the olive, Darwish claims a presence more ancient than Palestine's most ancient and sacred symbol (Al Fawa'ra, 2019, p. 421). This is a bold rhetorical move that elevates Palestinian indigeneity to cosmic rather than merely historical status.

The cypress (*sarw*—سرو), meanwhile, symbolizes:

- **Verticality and aspiration:** Cypresses grow tall and straight
- **Permanence:** Cypress wood resists decay, used historically for sacred buildings
- **Death and mourning:** In Mediterranean cultures, cypresses are often planted in cemeteries

The pairing of olive (life, peace, sustenance) with cypress (death, permanence, mourning) creates a totality — Palestinian roots precede both life and death, both peace and grief.

### Postcolonial Counter-Narrative:

This passage engages directly with what Patrick Wolfe (1999) terms the "logic of elimination" in settler colonialism — the project of replacing indigenous populations to create the demographic facts for territorial claims. Zionist discourse historically employed myths of emptiness ("a land without people for a people without land") and backwardness ("making the desert bloom") to justify dispossession (Said, 1978).

Darwish's primordial roots counter these myths by asserting not just historical presence but *ontological priority*. Palestinians are not merely *in* the land; they emerge *from* the land itself, as grass emerges from soil. This is what Indigenous studies scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) calls "grounded normativity" — ethical and political systems

rooted in place-based relationships rather than abstract principles (cited in Priwanda & Fanani, 2024, p. 8).

The British Mandate period (1920-1948) saw systematic efforts to map, survey, and document Palestinian land for purposes of control and eventual transfer to Jewish settlement. These colonial archives often erased Palestinian presence by classifying cultivated Palestinian land as "state land" or "wasteland" available for settlement (Khalidi, 1997). Darwish's poetic response is to assert a presence that predates and transcends any archive—a presence written in roots rather than documents.

#### **Barthesian Mythological Reading:**

For Barthes (1972), myth transforms history into nature—it makes culturally specific, historically contingent meanings appear universal and inevitable. Colonial myths naturalize occupation by presenting Palestinians as recent arrivals, temporary occupants, or culturally inferior inhabitants of land that "naturally" belongs to others.

Darwish creates a counter-myth that also transforms history into nature, but in reverse: Palestinian presence is naturalized as primordial, eternal, inevitable. The roots metaphor performs this naturalization—just as we cannot imagine a tree without roots, so we cannot imagine Palestine without Palestinians. Identity becomes botanical fact rather than political claim (Rustam, Ahmad, & Pallawagau, 2024, p. 1098).

However, unlike colonial myths that serve domination, Darwish's counter-myth serves liberation. It provides psychological and cultural resources for resisting dispossession by anchoring identity in a narrative that cannot be disputed through historical evidence (which colonizers control) but can only be believed or disbelieved as an article of faith (Masyitoh, Haniefah, & Bahtiar, 2025)

#### **Ecological and Indigenous Knowledge:**

The passage also reflects ecological knowledge specific to the Levant. Palestinians, particularly farmers (*fallāḥīn*), possess intimate knowledge of local vegetation, seasonal patterns, and agricultural techniques passed down through generations. This knowledge is what James Scott (1998) terms *mētis*—practical wisdom rooted in experience rather than formal education.

By referencing the sequence of vegetation growth—grass before shrubs before trees—Darwish demonstrates this ecological literacy. The poem suggests that Palestinian identity is inseparable from environmental knowledge, that belonging to place is proven through intimate understanding of its natural systems (Al Fawa'ra, 2019, p. 422).

This resonates with contemporary Indigenous rights discourse, which recognizes that indigenous peoples' claims to land rest not primarily on legal titles but on long-standing relationships of reciprocal care and knowledge. Palestinians' ability to read the land, to know which stones hold water, which plants indicate which season, which winds bring which weather—this embodied knowledge constitutes a form of sovereignty that persists even when political sovereignty is denied (Alhirthani, 2024, p. 15).

#### **Contemporary Land Struggles:**

Today, Israeli settlement expansion continues to uproot Palestinian olive trees—an estimated 2.5 million olive trees have been destroyed since 1967 (Reskiana, 2024, p. 87). Each uprooted tree is both economic loss (olives provide livelihood for

thousands of families) and symbolic violence (destroying living connections to ancestors who planted trees generations ago).

Palestinian resistance to this includes:

- **Replanting campaigns:** Organizations replant destroyed olive groves, often with international solidarity volunteers
- **Tree-hugging protests:** Farmers physically protect trees from Israeli bulldozers
- **Legal challenges:** Using Israeli and international courts to contest demolitions
- **Documentation:** Photographing and recording destroyed trees to maintain memory

These contemporary struggles embody Darwish's root metaphor: even when trees are uprooted, the *idea* of roots – of deep, ineradicable connection – persists and motivates continued resistance (Hafidzulloh & Salam, 2021, p. 61). By grounding identity in land and history, Darwish transforms poetry into a site of political testimony and cultural survival.

## 7. Roots and History as a Symbol of the continuity of identity

Teks:

جذوري...  
 قَبْلَ ميلادِ الزمانِ رست  
 وقَبْلَ تَفْتَحِ الحقبِ  
 وقَبْلَ السَّروِ والزيتونِ  
 وقَبْلَ ترعرعِ العشبِ

This section presents one of the most profound metaphors in Bitaqah Hawiyyah, when Mahmoud Darwish uses the symbol "جذوري" ("my roots") to affirm the existential relationship between humans, land, and history. Denotatively, جذور means the part of a plant embedded in the ground; however, in a semiotic context, it becomes a sign of identity attachment that cannot be uprooted from Palestinian land (Al Fawa'ra, 2019).

The line "قَبْلَ ميلادِ الزمانِ رست / وقَبْلَ تَفْتَحِ الحقبِ" ("My roots were established before the birth of time / and before the opening of ages") expands the meaning of roots as a symbol of authenticity that transcends human history (Alhirthani, 2024). In Barthes' view, this is a mythologization of identity, where roots function as a primordial metaphor, affirming that Palestinian existence existed long before colonialism.

The expression "وقَبْلَ ترعرعِ العشبِ / وقَبْلَ السَّروِ والزيتونِ" ("Before the cypress and the olive, before the grass grew") strengthens this historical claim by shifting the meaning of natural symbols. Olives and cypresses, symbols of peace and fertility, are actually placed after the existence of roots. In Barthes' framework, this is a cultural code that rejects the colonizers' symbolic claims over Palestinian land.

At the mythological level, roots become a sign of eternity – identity that merges with land and time. Through this symbol, Darwish rewrites history from the perspective of oppressed people: that land is not owned by colonizers but has had its inhabitants since "before time was born." Thus, roots function dually as symbols of collective identity and moral legitimacy of the Palestinian nation (Al Fawa'ra, 2019).

## 8. Social Origins and the Dignity of Common People



"My father is from a family of plowers, not  
from honored nobles  
My grandfather was a peasant, without  
pedigree or lineage!  
He taught me the pride of the sun before  
reading books  
My house is a watchman's hut of sticks and  
reeds  
Does my status please you?  
I am a name without title"

أبي.. من أسرة المحراث  
لا من سادة نجب  
وجدي كان فلاحا  
إبلا حسب.. ولا نسب  
يعلمني شموخ الشمس قبل قراءة الكتب  
وبيتي كوخ ناطور  
من الأعواد والقصب  
فهل ترضيك منزلتي  
أنا اسم بلا لقب

This section displays the social dimension that becomes the foundation of Mahmoud Darwish's symbolic resistance. Through the acknowledgment "أبي من أسرة" ("My father is from a family of plowers, not from honored nobles"), the poet affirms his origin from the peasant class (Alhirthani, 2024). Denotatively, this describes family simplicity; but connotatively, it is a critique of social structures that link honor with noble blood (Ganai & Irshad, 2021). In Barthes' framework, this is a reversal of ideological codes: simplicity is transformed into a sign of purity and human authenticity (Antonia, 2023).

### Extended Analysis:

The opposition between "family of plowers" (*usrat al-mihrāth* — أسرة المحراث) and "honored nobles" (*sāda nujub* — سادة نجب) structures this passage's ideological work. The *mihrāth* (محراث) is a plow — the fundamental agricultural implement used for millennia to prepare soil for planting. To come from "a family of the plow" is to claim working-class, peasant (*fallāḥ* — فلاح) identity.

In traditional Arab society, social honor (*sharaf* — شرف) was structured around:

1. **Noble lineage** (*nasab* — نسب): Descent from prominent tribes, families, or religious figures
2. **Personal honor** (*ḥasab* — حسب): Individual achievements and moral reputation
3. **Wealth and property**: Land ownership, commercial success
4. **Education and scholarship**: Religious learning, literary accomplishment

The peasant class (*fallāḥīn*) historically occupied lower social positions in this hierarchy, despite forming the demographic majority and economic foundation of society. Urban elites, religious scholars, and merchant classes enjoyed higher prestige even though peasant labor fed everyone (Ganai & Irshad, 2021, p. 277).

Darwish's acknowledgment that his father comes "not from honored nobles" (*lā min sāda nujub*) appears initially as self-diminishment. However, the exclamation point after "without pedigree or lineage!" (*bilā ḥasab.. wa lā nasab!*) signals defiant pride rather than shame. The poet celebrates his peasant origins, rejecting the value system that would deem them inferior.

### Reversal of Elite Ideology:

The expression "وَجَدِّي كَانَ فَلَاحاً بَلَا حَسَبٍ وَلَا نَسَبٍ" rejects the patriarchal system that judges humans by lineage. For Darwish, dignity is not born from descent but from work and closeness to the land. This is demythologization – dismantling the myth of power that glorifies elite genealogy.

This reversal operates on several levels:

1. **Moral superiority:** The peasant's honesty, direct relationship with nature, and productive labor are implicitly valued above the noble's inherited privilege and exploitation of others' labor.
2. **Authenticity:** Palestinian identity is located in the *fallāḥ*, not the urban elite. This is historically significant because Palestinian elites often fled or were expelled in 1948, while peasants remained on the land. Thus, *fallāḥ* identity became synonymous with *sumud* (steadfastness).
3. **Anti-colonial nationalism:** Colonial powers often co-opted local elites as intermediaries and collaborators. By rejecting elite identity, Darwish also rejects collaborative positionality, aligning with the colonized masses rather than the privileged few (Nofal, 2017, p. 71).

This ideology resonates with Frantz Fanon's (1963) analysis in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he argues that authentic decolonization must emerge from the peasantry and urban poor rather than from bourgeois nationalist leaders who simply replace colonial masters while maintaining exploitative structures. Darwish's poetry embodies this Fanonian vision by centering peasant identity as the authentic locus of Palestinian nationalism (cited in Priwanda & Fanani, 2024, p. 9).

### Alternative Epistemology:

The line "يَعْلَمُنِي شَمُوحُ الشَّمْسِ قَبْلَ قِرَاءَةِ الْكِتَابِ" affirms knowledge sourced from nature and experience, not from colonial institutions. Sunlight becomes a metaphor for natural truth and life wisdom (Al Fawa'ra, 2019).

"The pride of the sun" (*shumūkh al-shams* – شَمُوحُ الشَّمْسِ) is a complex metaphor:

- **Shumūkh** (شَمُوحُ) means pride, loftiness, dignity, elevation – from the root sh-m-kh (ش-م-خ) related to height and nobility
- The sun rises daily regardless of human affairs – a natural dignity independent of social recognition
- Agricultural labor occurs under the sun; the *fallāḥ* knows sunrise and sunset intimately through daily bodily experience
- The sun gives light and life freely to all; it cannot be owned or monopolized – unlike land, which colonialism seizes

To learn "the pride of the sun *before* reading books" establishes an epistemological priority: embodied, experiential knowledge precedes and exceeds textual, formal education. This challenges colonial ideologies that denigrate oral cultures and experiential knowledge as "primitive" while elevating Western textual education as "civilization."

Palestinian peasant knowledge includes:

- **Agricultural techniques:** When to plant, how to conserve water, which crops suit which soils
- **Weather prediction:** Reading clouds, winds, animal behaviors to forecast rain or drought
- **Plant identification:** Knowing hundreds of plant species, their uses, their seasons
- **Oral history:** Memorizing genealogies, village histories, property boundaries through narrative rather than documents

This knowledge is what Vandana Shiva (1993) terms "biodiversity of the mind" – cognitive diversity that is as valuable as biological diversity, and equally threatened by monocultures (whether agricultural or educational) (cited in Alhirthani, 2024, p. 16).

### Material Conditions and Symbolic Dignity:

The simplicity of life in "وبيتي كوخٌ ناطورٍ من الأعوادِ والقصبِ" becomes a symbol of authenticity, that moral strength is born from honest life close to nature.

A *nāṭūr* (ناطور) is a watchman or guard who protects agricultural land and crops. The *nāṭūr*'s hut (*kūkh nāṭūr* – كوخ ناطور) is a temporary structure made of sticks (*a'wād* – أعواد) and reeds (*qaṣab* – قصب) – natural materials, biodegradable, humble. This is not permanent architecture but functional shelter.

Yet Darwish claims this hut as "my house" (*baytī* – بيتي). The Arabic word *bayt* carries connotations beyond mere physical structure—it means home, household, family, lineage (as in *bayt* meaning a line of poetry, suggesting that family/house/dwelling are as carefully constructed as verse). To call a watchman's hut *bayt* is to assert that home is constituted by presence and care rather than by architectural permanence or property ownership (Al Fawa'ra, 2019, p. 423).

This has profound implications in the context of Palestinian dispossession. After 1948, hundreds of Palestinian villages were demolished by Israeli forces – homes destroyed, villages depopulated, lands transferred to Jewish settlement (Khalidi, 1997). Palestinian refugees lost elaborate stone houses, ancestral properties, documented land titles. Yet Darwish's poem suggests that even if all physical structures are destroyed, *bayt* – home, belonging, identity – persists because it is relational and embodied rather than merely material.

The rhetorical question "فهل ترضيك منزلتي؟" ("Does my status please you?") is heavily sarcastic. It addresses an implied interlocutor – presumably the colonial authority who issues identity cards and judges Palestinian worthiness. The question exposes the absurdity of colonial evaluation: why should Palestinian dignity depend on colonial approval? The question mocks the very premise that colonizers have authority to judge the colonized (Ganai & Irshad, 2021, p. 278).

### Barthesian Semiotics of Class:

The closing "أنا اسم بلا لقب" ("I am a name without title") reinforces rejection of artificial social legitimacy. In Barthes' semiotics, "name" is authentic identity, while

"title" is an ideological signifier of power. By rejecting title, Darwish affirms existential freedom and the true dignity of common people.

Barthes (1972) analyzes how bourgeois ideology naturalizes class hierarchy – making social inequality appear as natural as biological difference. Titles (*alqāb*) are one mechanism of this naturalization: they make socially constructed status (doctor, professor, sir, lord) appear as essential attributes of persons rather than as contingent social positions.

Darwish's rejection of title performs what Barthes calls *demythologization* – exposing the constructed nature of social hierarchy and refusing to participate in its reproduction. "I am a name without title" asserts that identity precedes and exceeds social position, that one's *being* is not reducible to one's social *status* (Antonia, 2023, p. 40).

This has radical political implications: if identity doesn't require title, then Palestinian existence doesn't require Israeli recognition. Palestinians are not Palestinians *because* they hold identity cards issued by Israel; rather, they are Palestinians *despite* Israeli attempts to define them otherwise. The name – the act of self-naming – is sovereign; titles are subordinate (Muslim, 2024, p. 60).

### **Global Peasant Solidarity:**

*This stanza connects Palestinian struggle to global peasant movements and agrarian resistance. From the Zapatistas in Mexico proclaiming "Ya Basta!" ("Enough!") while defending indigenous land rights, to Via Campesina's international peasant movement, to landless workers' movements in Brazil and India – peasants worldwide resist dispossession by asserting that those who work the land are its rightful inhabitants (Reskiana, 2024, p. 88).*

Darwish's valorization of the *fallāḥ* resonates with this global discourse. Just as Indigenous peoples in the Americas resist settler colonialism by asserting relationships to land that precede and transcend colonial legal systems, so Palestinians resist by asserting that the *fallāḥ*'s intimate knowledge of and labor on the land constitutes a form of sovereignty that no occupier can legitimately dissolve (Hafidzulloh & Salam, 2021, p. 62).

The poem thus speaks not only to Palestinians but to all colonized, dispossessed, and exploited peoples who resist in the name of land, labor, and dignity.

## **9. Cultural Identity and Spatial Marginalization**

"Record

I am an Arab

Hair color: coal-black

Eye color: brown

My distinguishing features:

On my head an iqal over a keffiyeh

My palm is hard as rock

It scratches whoever touches it

My address:

I am from a forgotten isolated village

Its streets have no names

All its men are in the fields and quarries

Will you be angry?"

سَجِّلْ

أنا عربي

ولونُ الشعر.. فحمي

ولونُ العين.. بني

:وميزاتي

على رأسي عقالٌ فوقَ كوفيّه

وكفّي صلبة كالصخر

تخمشُ من يلامسها

:وعنواني

أنا من قريةٍ عزلاءٍ منسيّه

شوارعها بلا أسماء

وكلُّ رجالها في الحقْلِ والمحجر

فهل تغضب

This section opens with the command "سَجِّلْ" ("Record") and the declaration "أنا عربي" ("I am an Arab") which affirms the continuity of identity as the core of the poem Bitaqah Hawiyyah. Denotatively, this is an affirmative repetition, but connotatively it is a form of symbolic resistance—every erasure of Palestinian Arab identity is fought with rewriting existence through language (Hegarty, 2023). In Barthes' framework, this repetition becomes an action code that renews the meaning of identity through linguistic resistance (Antonia, 2023).

The physical description "ولون الشعر فحمي، ولون العين بني" (coal-black hair, brown eyes) makes the body a symbol of cultural pride. The body is not merely a biological image but a political text that affirms the authenticity and continuity of Arab culture (Alhirthani, 2024). Clothing symbols "عقال" and "كوفية" strengthen this: both function as cultural codes that reject colonial stereotypes and affirm national solidarity.

The expression "وكفي صلبة كالصخر تخمش من يلامسها" ("My palm is hard as rock...") expands the body metaphor as representation of resistance. Workers' hands symbolize the steadfastness of people united with their land. Meanwhile "قرية عزلاء" (forgotten isolated village) becomes a symbol of a nation erased from the map of history but revived through language (Al Fawa'ra, 2019).

The rhetorical question "هل تفعل غضب" ("Will you be angry?") becomes satire against powers afraid of the existence of oppressed people. Through symbols of body, clothing, and social space, Darwish builds a myth of inerasable identity: that being "Arab" means continuing to exist, to resist, and to rewrite oneself in history.

## 10. Land Grabbing and Stone Inheritance as a symbol of Resistance

Teks:

سَجِّلْ  
أنا عربي  
سلبت كروم أجدادي  
وأرضاً كنتُ أفلحها  
أنا وجميع أولادي  
ولم تترك لنا.. ولكل أحفادي  
..سوى هذي الصخور  
فهل ستأخذها  
حكومتكم.. كما قبلاً  
إذن

This section opens with the call "سَجِّلْ، أنا عربي" ("Record! I am an Arab") which affirms linguistic resistance against identity erasure. In Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, this repetition functions as an action code—every time power tries to nullify the subject, language rewrites it (Alhirthani, 2024). The expression "سلبت كروم أجدادي، وأرضاً كنتُ أفلحها" ("You have stolen my ancestors' vineyards, and land that I used to till myself") depicts the loss of living space due to colonialism. Land here becomes an ideological sign: from merely agricultural land, it transforms into a symbol of existence and resistance (Hegarty, 2023).

The sentence "أنا وجميع أولادي" ("I and all my children") expands meaning from individual to collective, affirming that the struggle belongs not only to the poet but to all generations of Palestine. Meanwhile, "ولم تترك لنا.. سوى هذي الصخور" ("You left us

nothing but these stones") transforms stone into a myth of resistance – a hard object that becomes a symbol of steadfastness and hope.

The question "هل ستأخذها حكومتكم.. كما قِلا" ("Will your government take these too?") contains irony toward colonial greed that even wants to seize the remnants of destruction. The closing word "إذن" ("Therefore...") marks a transition toward open resistance – a symbol that when all humanity is seized, resistance becomes the only remaining language. Thus, this section represents the symbolic peak of Bitaqah Hawiyyah, where land, family, and stones merge into a myth of Palestinian nationhood – transformation of simple signs into eternal discourse of resistance (Ganai & Irshad, 2021).

## 11. Existential warnings and the Myth of Anger

Teks:

سجّل.. برأس الصفحة الأولى  
أنا لا أكره الناس  
ولا أسطو على أحد  
ولكنني.. إذا ما جعت  
أكل لحم مغتصبي  
حذار.. حذار.. من جوعي  
ومن غضبي

The closing section of the poem Bitaqah Hawiyyah reaches an ethical and political climax through the command "سجّل.. برأس الصفحة الأولى" ("Record at the top of the first page"), which demands that this message be placed at the center of history, not merely as a literary work. The sentence "أنا لا أكره الناس / ولا أسطو على أحد" ("I do not hate people / nor do I assault anyone") affirms the poet's humanity: resistance is not born from hatred but for the sake of justice and survival (Hegarty, 2023).

The extreme metaphor "ولكنني.. إذا ما جعت / أكل لحم مغتصبي" ("But if I become hungry, I will eat the flesh of my usurper") becomes a symbol of moral crisis due to oppression. In Barthesian reading, this is a hypercode that shows human existential limits: when basic rights are seized, anger becomes a legitimate form of resistance (Ganai & Irshad, 2021). The repetition "حذار.. حذار" ("Beware... beware") functions as social prophecy – a warning that prolonged injustice will give birth to revolutionary explosion. In Barthes' mythology, this builds the myth of anger as moral legitimacy of oppressed people's resistance.

Thus, the poem's closing affirms two main messages: first, that resistance is born from humanity; second, that human patience has limits. Darwish closes his poem with a dual tone – moral and historical – making anger not merely emotion but a sign of existence and national honor (Hegarty, 2023).

## Synthesis of Overall Meaning

Overall, the poem "*Bitaqah Hawiyyah*" forms a layered structure of meaning from identity declaration to ideological resistance. Each stanza builds a chain of signs depicting the existential journey of Arab humanity from an oppressed position toward human consciousness. Darwish does not merely write about himself but makes "I" a collective representation of the Palestinian nation (Al Fawa'ra, 2019). Through repetitive style and imperative tone, this poem builds a kind of identity manifesto. In Barthes' framework, denotative meaning develops into myths about pride,

steadfastness, and the right to be recognized as free human beings (Rustam, Ahmad, & Pallawagau, 2025).

Stanza by stanza shows the evolution of interconnected signs: starting from affirmed personal identity, independence in work, deep historical roots, to anger as the peak of resistance. This poem creates continuity between body, land, and history as one unity of meaning. Denotation of social reality transforms into connotation of struggle and finally becomes ideological myth. The entire text becomes a symbol of resistance against colonialism and denial of existence. Thus, “*Bitaqah Hawiyyah*” is not only a poem of identity but also a political and cultural text that produces the myth of modern Arab nationhood (Alhirthani, 2024).

### **Ideological Interpretation**

At the ideological level, this poem represents resistance against the colonial system that seeks to erase Palestinian identity. Mahmoud Darwish uses language as a symbolic weapon: every word becomes a tool to reclaim seized existence (Alhirthani, 2024). The emerging myth is not merely Arab nationalism but also universal consciousness about human dignity. The identity of “I” in this poem rejects a passive position and instead affirms moral strength in facing injustice. Thus, poetic language becomes a form of resistance equal to physical struggle in the field (Rustam, Ahmad, & Pallawagau, 2024).

This poem also depicts how the ideology of resistance is built from the daily experiences of common people. Quarry workers, farmers, and wounded bodies become symbols of social steadfastness that transcends political boundaries. In Barthes’ context, Darwish successfully transforms simple signs into a new myth system: that the very existence of the Arab nation is already a form of resistance (Masyitoh, Haniefah, & Bahtiar, 2025). The anger in the last stanza is not blind violence but an expression of historical consciousness toward ongoing injustice. Thus, “*Bitaqah Hawiyyah*” affirms that maintaining identity is both a political and humanitarian act (Al Fawa’ra, 2019).

### **CONCLUSION**

Mahmoud Darwish's poem *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* represents a powerful demonstration of how language and symbols can become tools of resistance against hegemonic power. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic reading, it is evident that every sign in this poem – from personal identity, work, family, land, to stones – has layered meanings that transcend the literal level. Darwish transforms oppressive administrative language into liberating discourse; he reclaims the authority of naming and makes poetry a space for decolonization of meaning.

At the denotative level, this poem displays the social reality of Palestinian people living in limitations and colonization. However, connotatively and mythologically, Darwish builds an alternative sign system that affirms the existence, dignity, and eternity of Palestinian Arab identity. Symbols such as “roots,” “stones,” and “name without title” become myths of resistance that reject the erasure of history and identity.

Thus, *Bitaqah Hawiyyah* is not merely a poem of identity but also a manifesto of humanity. Through Barthes' semiotics, Darwish shows that resistance does not always present itself through weapons but can grow through language, patience, and existential consciousness. Identity becomes a symbolic force that affirms Palestinian existence, while poetry functions as an archive of memory and eternal resistance.

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