



## *In the Presence of Absence: Mahmoud Darwish's "Living on Border Lines"*

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Received 27 February 2021; accepted 14 April 2021

Published online 26 April 2021

### Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the autobiographical elegizing volume of Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence* (2006), in light of the main lines of Derrida's article "Living On: Border Lines" (1978). As known almost all the oeuvre of Darwish is a reflection of his main issue, Palestine. Considering his life in the chosen exile outside his motherland without any approaching final solution along with realizing the approach of his death due to heart disease, Darwish decides to write his elegy portraying the spiral enigma (double invagination) of the story "récit" of his survival on the margins of life. He keeps wo/andering, in his discourse with his "other," who triumphs "me, you, or death?" The endless multilayered worlds in which the narrator lives serve several goals. It is the dialectic between the fictional and the real, especially that the whole volume is autobiographical. It grants the author, Darwish, eternal life through the words, letters, and the poetry, he bequeaths his readers; and this supports the tendency that Darwish's identity is a call for postnational identity. Finally, the whole multilayered volume corresponds with the paradoxical connotations of "triumph of/over life/death."

**Key words:** Mahmoud Darwish; *In the Presence of Absence*; Jacques Derrida; Double invagination; Récit

Badurais, R. (2021). *In the Presence of Absence: Mahmoud Darwish's "Living on Border Lines"*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 22(2), 55-61. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/12108> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/12108>

### INTRODUCTION

Pride of one's identity, nationality, and belonging is an engendered component of one's being, of one's stable humanity. In today's fluid globalization, the minimum limit of identity solidity is increasingly questionable. Craig Calhoun proposes, from a Kantian perspective, the angle of human universality from which today's nations ought to consider themselves. Calhoun questions the necessity of shedding out the national identity replacing it with a postnational one elaborating, "[n]ationalism is not a moral mistake [...; however,] we should approach nationalism with critical attention to its limits, illusions, and potential for abuse, but we should not dismiss it" (Calhoun, 2007, p.1). Erica Mena describes poetry as an attempt to herald a postnational conception of identity. She quotes Edward Said's reference to the same concept in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) describing the modern borderlines between nations that violate the traditional "static notion of identity" (p.xxv as quoted in Mena, 2009, p.111). One of the possible ways of achieving this new approach to identification is the imagination, Mena asserts, as an agent through narrative, and poetry. In this light, postnational identity is a kind of escapism from the grim reality of lack of firm clear-cut belonging to geography proposed in the realm of fantasy/ virtuality. Such escapism is a soothing shelter for the diasporic nations exiled from their homeland wandering around the world helpless to return or to adapt to reality. Such a situation is a typical context for Palestinian writers. However, they do never shed or call for shedding the constant belonging to the land of Palestine (or any other motherland) and at the same time reflect their insistence to live and resist by creating that imaginary world in which and through which they represent their issue and make all four corners of the world know about it.

Palestinian authors' works are marked by the fluctuating circumstances that shape their real daily lives. This portrayal is intensified after Alnakba- the

Catastrophe- of 1948. Recommended by Wesserstein (2012), Assadi introduces and discusses an anthology of Palestinian poets and their poetry, including Hanna Abu Hanna, Samih AlQasem, and Tawfiq Zayyad.

Mahmoud Darwish is one of the most influential poets of Palestine and a remarkable figure not only in the Arab world but also in world literature, especially during his diasporic life after his chosen exile from Palestine. Darwish prefers being a stranger on a strange land to being a stranger in his motherland. Depending on accounts of his biography, Mahmoud Darwish was born in Galilee in 1941. At the age of 7, the child Mahmoud, with his family, bore witnesses of the minute details of 1948 Nakba. Ever after, he lived a complex of diasporic exiles in Palestine and outside until his 'expected' death in 2008 during fatal open heart surgery in the USA. Of great significance and relevance to the present article is the hint indicated by Wesserstein (2012) in the course of introducing Darwish's biography

His family, exiled in Lebanon because of the fighting, illegally crossed the border back into Israel a year later—too late to be included in the first census of the new state. As a result, they were given the status of “present absentees,” an anomalous Israeli legal invention, placing them in the interstices of being: present because they were, after all, physically there; absent because they had not been there at the right time. (p.112)

Darwish is a prolific poet whose works represent typically modernist and postmodernist trends in Arab and world poetry. Among the poems and volumes he produces are: “ID Card” (1964), *A Lover From Palestine* (1966), *Memory of Forgetfulness* (1987), *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* (1995), *Mural* (2000), *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* (2003), *In the Presence of Absence* (2006), *The Butterfly's Burden* (2007), among others. In his poems, there are two significant persistent indications, first; Palestine that is said to be the unobtainable beloved of his dreams, second; the style/ language of his poems, especially the recent ones; which is a mixture of prose and verse.

*In the Presence of Absence* (2006), the volume concerned in this article is not the last of Darwish's production. It is written as an elegy for Darwish wants to elegize himself before being elegized expecting his death at any moment. In the preface to his translation of Darwish's volume, Sinan Antoon (2011) states,

With every new work, he surprised his readers and entered another phase in his ongoing birth, as he called it. This work was designated in its subtitle as a “text.” It was neither a collection of poems nor an ordinary work of prose. The book's title and cover already welcomed the reader into the space Darwish was creating. A space where presence and absence, prose and poetry, and many other opposites converse and converge.

This description typically corresponds with the state

“present absentees” indicated above. Besides, the details of Darwish's text create a complex of embeddedness both internal and external, and “reads as a typical, albeit fragmented autobiography in which the author sums up his life and evaluates his experiences, like a closing of accounts if you wish (Rooke, 2008, p.14).

Signifying his death, being considered the last, but followed by other works put *In the Presence of Absence* at the threshold of Darwish's works and make it a typical context to be analyzed in light of Derrida's essay “Living on: Border Lines” (1979) as attempted in this paper to reveal Darwish's state of double invagination and diaspora in this autobiographical elegiac volume.

In this volume, Mahmoud Darwish expresses his traumatic diasporic identity through language. Language (or the text) is the primary concern of deconstruction as the starting fertile field of reading/ criticism. Moreover, the iterability of binaries in *In the Presence of Absence* along with their echos in other, previous and following, volumes of Darwish create more layers of embeddedness complicated by

the death of the author [which] posits new meanings to the text, but in this case not by way of his total absence, [...] but through his increased presence as an unavoidable point of reference and source of identification for the reader. *The Presence of Absence* is not only the title of a book, but also, implicitly, an instruction of how to read it. (Rooke, 2008, p.12)

The previous studies conducted about Darwish's poetry have tackled it from a wide variety of perspectives. Among these studies are a good number that shed more light on Darwish's language and the binaries between which he keeps searching for his identity like Rooke (2008), Qbilat and Alshrosh (2011), Mena (2009), Mukattash (2016), Abusamra (2017) and Rahahleh (2014). However, these studies focus on internal intertextuality and binaries as the main conceptual framework. The only study that analyses Darwish's *In the Presence of Absence* from a deconstructive perspective is Abusamra (2017), but she uses Derrida's “Specters of Marx” and Barthes' “The Death of the Author” as her chief theoretical guide. Therefore, this study is an attempt to highlight the enigmatic and ambivalent state of the search for identity by Darwish, alive and dead, using Derrida's main arguments in “Living on: Border Lines.” This reading of the text is supposed to open a dialectic with internal and external ‘récit’ which -in its turn- opens circles of embeddedness and doubles invaginations to defy the existence of a final borderline of the ‘récit.’

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## THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DERRIDA'S “LIVING ON: BORDER LINES”

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“Living on: Border Lines” is Derrida's contribution to *Deconstruction and Criticism* (1979). The article

is divided into the chief/upper text and the lower text/footnote. Considering it as an application of the grafting techniques. The upper, "Living on," displays the remote link between Blanchot's *L'arrêt de morte* and *le foul de jour* with Shelley's last unfinished poem *The Triumph of life* whereas the lower, "Borderlines," is a comment on the possible way of translating the text. Jonathan Culler (1981) explains that the two texts of Derrida's article -one set above the other- are grafted in a way that "gives the lower something of the framing of parergonal character of commentary" (p.137). Videre Spectare (2011) emphasizes the embeddedness of the upper part between Blanchot's texts and Shelley's poem and the "way in which the two texts "read" each other."

At the very beginning of the article, Derrida deconstructs the phrase "living on" to prove that it is a persistent process of meaning generation

living on can mean a reprieve or an afterlife, "life after life" or life after death, more life or more than life, and better; the state of suspension in which it's *over--and* over again, and you'll never have done with that suspension itself) and the triumph of life can also triumph *over* life and reverse the procession of the genitive. I shall demonstrate shortly that this is not wordplay, not on your life. (Derrida, 1979, p.77)

This endless suspension of the meaning does not allow the "saturation" of the texts whether the author is alive or dead. The arguments lead Derrida to ask the question "What is life? And he suggests two indications: the value of life " (Does life have meaning, sense? Does it have the slightest value? Is it worth living? Who's talking about living? --- and so forth), and the being of life " (What is the essence of life? What is life? What is the living-ness ... of life? --- and so forth)" (p.79). Then he discusses the possible translations of the title of Shelley's poem into French and the possibility of committing, say, the mistake of translating it as "Triumph of life" or "triumph over life."

Any text has a border or an edge, but what is it? Is it the cover? Or the title? Or the first sentence of the text? Or the first sentence one reads? There are multiple possible edges within the boundary of the text and also there are other borderlines of the text from outside. The chain is endless. The text is never saturated.

Derrida attempts to realize his proposal about the unsaturated edges of a text by introducing "a more indirect, narrower channel, one that is more concrete as well: at the edge of the narrative, of the text as a narrative. The word is *recit*, a story, a narrative, and not *narration*, narration" (p.85). Thus the "récit" is the narrative that never be closed. There are three main features of "récit." First, "double affirmation" of the récit means the narrative is of two possibilities either affirming or contradicting each other. Second, "double narrative (iterability/multilayered vision)" indicates the possibility of

interpreting one genre by another. Third, the "antithetical" dimension implies the paradoxical underlying of the récit.

One of the chief concepts relevant to the previous ones is "double invagination." Derrida defines it as: "Invagination is the inward refolding of la gaine {sheath, girdle}, the inverted reapplication of the outer edge to the inside of a form where the outside then opens a pocket. Such an invagination is possible from the first trace on. This is why there is no "first" trace" (p.97). So, this term corresponds with the primary tenets of deconstruction in that it emphasizes the ambivalence between two sides/ a binary. Actually, it supports Derrida's principal concept of "différance."

To sum up, the chief axioms of Derrida's article "Living on: Border Lines" opens the way for an endless process of creative analysis that links the remotest texts and releases them from the narrow borders to boundless ones. Mahmoud Darwish's texts provide fertile materials for such a framework, especially because of the implicit and explicit intertextuality between his volumes and poems and because of his lifelong chosen exile from his homeland that proves to be a traumatic inscription on Mahmoud Darwish, the human being and the poet. Moreover, Darwish's récit calls and intersects with Shelley's poem and Blanchote's texts, on the one hand, and with his own life story and previous works.

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## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

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Mahmoud Darwish's volume *In the Presence of Absence* is an extraordinary autobiographical account. The "récit" is narrated "from cradle to grave"; he died less than two years after launching the volume. This narrative of the story of his life is linked thematically and linguistically to all oeuvre of Darwish (before and after). Reading it inspires the impression that Darwish feels defeated in front of his weak heart after a long life of resisting the occupation of his land through his poetry, which proves to be seriously problematic for the Zionist authorities who arrested Darwish when he was in Palestine and prevent teaching his poems in their schools lest they affect their children's attitude towards their state. Therefore, the link with other volumes can provide the multilayered edges of the text. *In the Presence of Absence* does not start with the title and does not end with the death of Mahmoud Darwish. The dialectic eternal link with the past and future is launched once the volume is published.

Starting from the title, there seems to be "invisible quotation marks" bordering the word "Presence" because the English translation reflects, at the first glance, one of the dimensions of the meaning of the word. In English, there are three main meanings of "presence" as a noun: 1) state of existing, occurring, being present, 2) A person or thing that exists or is present in a place but not seen, 3) impressive manner or appearance of a person. All

correspond with the meaning of the Arabic word. All are applicable, but there is one indication of the word as a term used in Arabic which is about the Sophists' "Hadrāh." The concept is relevant more to the second English concept. "Hadrāh" is a Sophist term that indicates gatherings in which Allah's name is being invoked, they gather and mention Allah until they reach a moment of spiritual purity and close link to Allah. This dimension of the meaning adds some spirituality to the title and the text as being edged in one of the levels by this title. The idea is hinted at in Abusamra's study; the concept of the ghostlike presence of the poet/ narrator as being alive or dead.

As indicated by Sinan Antoon in his preface to the volume, the subtitle of the volume is a "text." This subtitle serves as another edge for the whole work. The genre of this "text" cannot be identified for the author himself states "I was searching for another form of writing. This text is the convergence of two genres: prose and poetry" (Antoon, 2011). The process of double invagination works, here, in that the language of the text in which there are blocks of prose merged with lines of verse in a dialectic unpredictable manner.

The third edge is the epigraph:

Do not go far! they say as they bury me  
Where, if not faraway, is my place?

MĀLIK IBN AL-RAYB (D. 676)

Antoon comments on this use stating, "Self-elegy is an established genre in classical Arabic poetry, with roots going back to pre-Islamic times. In Darwish's hands this kernel is introduced to new ground and branches out toward new horizons." The *récit* of Ibn Alrayb's mourning himself corresponds dialectically with Darwish's text and reflects the paradox of presence/ absence, life/ death.

"I scatter you before me line by line with a mastery I possessed only in beginnings," this is the first line of section I (the first) and section XX (the last) of the text. The iterability of the line is crucial in determining the circularity of the text and that it ends from where it starts. But is the beginning a true one, since there have been other borders of the starting point as explained above!? And repeating the "Beginning" at the end instead of using a word to close the text, again serves the main concept of double invagination. The use of the two pronouns "I" and "you" is also significant. The narrator divides himself into two. Though it reminds the reader of Eliot's traumatic schizophrenic Prufrock, this is not typically psychological trouble rather than/ but a state of meditation with the self. "scatter" suggests a random movement whereas "line by line" gives the impression of a somehow orderly process. The antithetical vision suggests the bidirectional movement between scattering and order to build an image that might vary every time. "Line by line, the synecdoche refers to poetry and suggests that there is a kind of complete incarnation between the author and his poetry: "so long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

"As for death, nothing insults it like betrayal, its proven specialty. Let me then set off for my rendezvous as soon as I find a grave with a marble headstone over which only my ancestors will challenge me. I do not care if a letter falls from my name, just as the *Yā'* fell from my grandfather's name by mistake." (Section I)

In this quotation, the narrator is teasing death by using its own trick "betrayal" and writing his elegy. He also expresses the grim fact that it is hard even to find a home grave of one's own in one's own home. Therefore, there is no privacy either in life or in death! The most important tell-tale point in this quotation is singling the "Ya" letter of the ones that might fall from his name. "Ya" is the last letter of the Arabic alphabet, i.e., an edge. When it falls, it signifies the loss of an end, and thus an opening is created, a hole that indicates a change/ disorder or deformation. This drop has happened "by mistake" to show the significance of the loss because it happens in a moment of carelessness or inattention/ arbitrarily. The loss then is doubled.

In the next part, "Let me go, without cane or rhyme, on a path we have tread aimlessly, with no desire to arrive." the dilemma continues when he decides to go "without cane or rhyme." The cane is the walking stick used to *support* a weak/old person to walk well. The narrator decides to pursue his directionless way without any support. the support is to walk straight and reach but the feeling of nihilism makes the narrator loses any desire. Besides, and as he starts the volume stating "line by line," he continues the image and states that he will go on without "rhyme." The idea inspired by "rhyme" is that there is a harmonious end as if the rhyme is the *support* of the lines not to fall to go straight. Then he emphasizes the whole image describing the process as aimless and "with no desire to arrive." The open-ended movement has no borders or the walker does not have any desire to be bound by them for they seem aimless under his unique feeling of traumatic "living on" or "survival."

Allow me, then, as we part company at this threshold, to break the contract between one absurdity and another. For we do not know who triumphed and who was defeated, me, you, or death, because we had not conceded beforehand that the enemy was smarter and more cunning in order to triumph.

The choice of the word "threshold" is significant as it marks a zone in between two sides/ worlds, or a border/ and edge. Another importance concerning this word is its translation from Arabic/ or its Arabic equivalent. The Arabic word is "Barzakh" which generally means "a barrier between two things" and specifically "the interval between death and resurrection." The translation "threshold" does not reflect exactly the depth of the Arabic word and only shows one side of this multilayered

concept. The same word is repeated later to give an allusion of crossing it from “the horizon” to the “abyss” and enter a state of present absence and absent presence. “[B]etween absurdity and another” or between absurdity and absurdity deepens the feeling of loss and that even the concrete borders are useless to define or bound it. Then, Darwish, through his narrator, outlines the whole issue, “who triumphed and who was defeated, me, you, or death.” It is not binary any longer, it becomes ternary “me, you, and death” Considering “me, you,” they are supposed to refer to the same person, but one is dying and the other is meant to be eternalized in these lines. Any human being is going to die sooner or later, thus death will win. The one to live in poetry is supposed to be eternal thus defy death. Loss and triumph appear on both sides. The intensified bewilderment, later, leads him to in section VIII, as he keeps narrating the stages of his life, he talks about living in the margin: “We survive, but do not triumph. I said to you: Survival is the/ prey’s potential triumph over the hunter. Steadfastness is survival and survival is/ the beginning of existence.” Here, in the margin where he suffers from loss of time and of space, there are stages of living on steadfastness, survival, then existence. This process is “prey’s potential triumph over the hunter,” but is it a true triumph?

This steadfastness is faced by the interrogation: “Who are you? You check all your body parts and say: I am myself. They say:/Where is the proof? You say: I am. They say: This is not enough. We need lack./So you say: I am both perfection and lack. They say: Say that you are a stone so/ we can end our excavation. You say: If only the young man were a stone. But/ they did not understand you.” (section I).

The point here is how to prove what is obvious?! It is obvious that the narrator exists but the interrogators demand proof. He thinks that the boundary of his body “check all your body parts” is proof enough, but it proves not to be so! To be a stone becomes another demand and a wish by the narrator to get a clear-cut acknowledged identity, “If only the young man were a stone. But they did not understand you.” Then, because he fails to prove himself in a way that suits the whims of the invaders, he is exiled. But

As for your shadow, it neither followed you nor/deceived you.  
It froze there and became a stone. Then it grew green like a/  
sesame plant, green during the day and blue at night. Then it  
grew and soared/ like a willow, green by day and blue by night.

“The shadow” follows its object/ body as long as there is light. In the darkness, it ceases to do so/ it ceases to exist. The narrator leaves the land without a shadow. It is illogical; however, the separation between one and his land; the process of tearing the one, scatters everything and no logic governs the situation then. The paradox here is that the shadow proves to be more consistent and clings to the right of the land rather than the man. On the other

hand, the shadow gives the impression of a ghostlike presence or both contradictory concepts presence and absence.

One of the remarkable recurrent images in the text is the reference to letters. At first, and as explained above, he mentions the last letter in the Arabic alphabet, “Ya.” Also, he refers to the twenty-fourth letter, “Nun” which “... longs for fullness, yet is never full”. The link between “Ya” and “Nun” is that the shapes of both are incomplete circles with two dots under the circle of “Ya” and one dot above the “Nun.” It seems that he singled these letters by description to signify the lack of completeness and the unstable positioning. Then he continues “you must defend the discrete letters of your name as a cat would its kittens.” The letters of his name are scattered as in the case of the narrator and the addressee, his/ their identity is discrete between margins and thresholds. His wish to resurrect his belonging through and in language, especially the language of poetry, is portrayed by the attempts to link letters and form words: “Three letters/ become a door or a house. Thus, lethargic letters, which carry no value when/ separate, build a house when they come together.” However, in his childish inquiry, he wonders: “How can letters take on so many words? How can words have enough space to embrace the world?” (section III) and he wonders about the meaning of “homeland”: “Can a word of eight letters be big enough for all of these, yet too small for us?”

This “stanza” is the last of section I. in it the narrator applies

the play of words” skillfully:” “No matter how near you come,  
you will remain distant. No matter how often you/ are killed,  
you will live. So do not think that you are dead there, and alive  
here./ ... I/ elegize and I am the elegized. Be me so I can be you!  
Rise up so I can carry you!/ Come near so I can know you! Go  
far away so I can know you! (emphasis original.)

He describes the state of chaos created by the “*geography from a shadow*” He is entrapped in this new identity/ positioning of “lost place and lost time.” (section II) in which “Time,/ which we feel only when it is too late, is the trap waiting for us at the edge of the/ place where we arrive late, unable to dance on the threshold separating/ beginning from end!” In such a state all boundaries are broken and the way is open to falling in “the trap”, especially that of the “lost time” and thus to pass the “the threshold separating beginning from end!” At the end of section III, nostalgia reaches its peak when the narrator cries his passionate need for the time of reality, not meanings, words, compensations. It is a cry of being fed up with, maybe, deceiving himself with the home in “Metaphors” and “the geography of the shadow.” “*Be a child again, so I can/ see my face in your mirror*” he searches for himself and he is there in the days of childhood before the occupation. The end of the stanza “*Are you I? Am I you? Teach me poetry, so I can/ elegize*

you now, now, now. Just as you elegize me!" contradicts the beginning "Be a child again. Teach me poetry. Teach me the rhythm of the sea. Return to/ words their initial innocence..." for the beginning is a wish to be a child and the end is a wish to elegize himself/ his peer/ his addressee.

Throughout the volume, there are iterated frequent images of the state of in-betweenness which corresponds with the narrative of his life of traveling and adventure. ((the home is a bag!)). These images are "gypsy," the "airport," "the adventure," "the margin," and "the swinging/ambivalence between past, present and future."

"How you trained yourself to reside in *adventure*," the adventure which implies meanings of surprise, risk, and the unexpected. Then he discovers that "You avoided defining a thing by its opposite, because the opposite of wrong is not always right. Homeland is not always daylight and exile is not night . . ." the full stop becomes three dots/ *ellipsis*, and the mistaken concepts and binaries are endless.

This journey throughout the confusion makes him realize that "Everything here is proof of loss and lack. Everything here is a painful reminder of what had once been there. What wounds you most is that "there" is so close to "here." " the quotation marks here are remarkable. Darwish highlights these two spatial words to reflect the tragic loss of time and space. Therefore, the nostalgic passion is vivid "Out of all that you feel, out of all the misery of the present, which hungers for your identity to be defined . . . the past was born." Then he tries to escape to the future, "He suffers from the malady of the present, so take him to tomorrow." Even this wish will not be granted for "There is nothing we can do and there is no tomorrow". "their/warrior, prematurely aged by the yoke *ثيئانث* of home and road", "Taut, like a string drawn between yesterday and tomorrow. " In these two descriptions of the addressee or the narrator (who are both the author), he portrays his state typically as in the in-between without being able to reach any end/ edge/ border. His life is "aged" waiting for the arrival to an end or the return in vain. Therefore, he "had to choose the margin to know where you stand. "because the margin for him becomes a threshold, "a/ window looking out on the world. You are neither in it, nor outside it. The/ margin is a cell without walls."

As he proceeds in elegizing the life after the displacement, in section VI, the narrator repeats "you lived" many times as if he doubts the meaning and the value of this survival wondering is it a triumph just to live or is it another kind of death? Is it a triumph of/over life/ death? The other repeated idea here is the "gypsies": "Is this why you carried gypsies along with/ you whenever place was separated from time, and whenever place was scattered/ in its inhabitants searching for it in traces of scents that prove the sensuality of/ the soul?" As known

the gypsies are a traveling people, they wonder searching for a livelihood. They represent here the notion of non-belonging and instability. "describing himself/ or his addressee as "carrying" the gypsies implies that it is an extra burden upon him; it is not his nature to be a gypsy-like person/ nation. Again, the gypsy-like wandering defies the traditional concept of borders and makes any place a home; a temporary home! , it thus opens the way for an unlimited number of instantaneous layers.

In correspondence with the image of endless traveling, the image of the *airport* is recurrent: "You lived/ everywhere like a traveler in an airport terminal sending you, like airmail, to/ another airport. An itinerant crisscrossing the fusion of the "here" with the/ "there." " the use of the simile makes the readers wonder between the reality and fiction. But later he states: "You sit in a distant corner at the airport restaurant and wonder about the purpose/ of the journey: Am I going or coming back? No one is waiting for me when I go/ and there is no reason for me to return." And when asked whether he regrets this journey, his answer is "I do not know, because I / am still at the beginning of the road" just to let the matter loose and the end never comes either alive or dead.

As if I were a runaway/from one of the novels on display at the newspaper stand. Running away from/the writer, the reader, and the seller. I can add, delete, edit, change, kill, be/ killed, walk, sit, fly, be what I want, love, hate, ascend, descend, even fall off/ mountaintops and not be hurt, because I do not transgress the writer's rights, and/ I have a different perspective regarding fate, my fate.

The figurative use here marked by the simile "As if" opens more dimensions between reality and fiction. A fictional character runs away from a novel, and he can do anything without being harmed/ not subject to human deficiencies. He revolts against the creator "the writer" and the dealers "the reader, and the seller." The traumatic state here reaches its utmost. Here it can be described as gravity zero. He is not attached to anything, "I can add, delete, edit, change, kill, be/ killed, walk, sit, fly, be what I want, love, hate, ascend, descend, even fall off/ mountaintops and not be hurt" and wish to govern his fate, but "I do not transgress the writer's rights". Here it seems that the layers of dissatisfaction and anger inside the narrator reach to implying a complaint of/ to God. He feels lost between "the writer, the reader, and the seller."

The state of bewilderment is intensified throughout the sections, "You said: The road is ours when we speak of tomorrow. I said: The journey has/ begun. You said:/ How many times will you tell me the journey has begun?" (section IX), "You said: How many times will you tell me the journey has begun? I said: The poem is incomplete." (Section IX), "I came, but did not arrive./I came, but did not return!" (section XVI). It is clear the diaspora is deepened when the road/path seems to be endless; no ruses to convince oneself of the reality.

Then he tries to come out with a satisfying conclusion, in vain:  
“ The last chapter, the ending, has endless possibilities! “ (section VIII)  
“ Exile, a misunderstanding between existence and borders, is a fragile bridge between images. “ (section X)  
“ What can you/do when you reach Mount Carmel except ask: Why did you come down from the mountain? Your ever-perplexed self offers only the vaguest of responses: to/learn how to walk on unfamiliar roads. “ (section XVII).

Then, he concludes the whole volume: “You and I are absent, you and I are present/and absent./So which of your Lord’s favors do you two deny? “ (section XX). Absence dominates and a secret invocation and, at the same time, a complaint arises from quoting the last line from Al-Rahman chapter in the Holy Quran.

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## CONCLUSION

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As the professional grasp of the language is Darwish’s shelter for home and identity; for compensation, his autobiographical (or poetographical) volume exemplifies typically that skill. There is an intermingling process between the life in the real world and the poetic self and a dialogue between the embedded layers of memory, regret, helplessness, and pity that the years of life are sneaking like the grains of sand in the sand watch without any hope to regain his lost homeland. In the analysis above, there are moments in which Darwish’s text intersects externally with Derrida’s article’s main recits: Shelley’s poem and Blanchote’s texts, with Antoon’s translation and preface. There are instances of intertextuality with other texts written by the poet himself, that can be called internal intertextuality and other instances of fragmented self to the extent that the narrator/ the addressee/ addresser/ the poet (who are one) involve in an open-ended dialogue.

To end this paper, the author would like to share Sinan Antoon’s, the translator of the volume, dedication to the poet: “This translation [and this paper] is an act of love for Darwish and homage to his poetry and genius. It marks the end of a mourning period following his death. It also celebrates his eternal presence in his words and his long life in us, his readers.”

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